

Lutheran World Federation

Youth

magazine

YOUTH OVERCOMING VIOLENCE

47

Department for
Mission and Development

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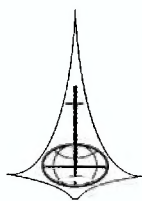
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On 4 February 2001, the World Council of Churches (WCC) internationally launched the "Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV)" in Berlin, Germany. One might ask, "Why only now?" Yes, but violence is not a new phenomenon. It has affected God's creation since the fall of the first human beings. Quite interestingly, the first murder was committed by young people, namely that of Cain committed against his own brother Abel (Gen 4). That was more than 2,000 years ago. Since then, violence has continued to "enslave" many people.

Today, violence is no longer simply a physically inflicted act, nor is it a private matter. Furthermore, it is no longer inflicted solely on human beings, and has transcended far beyond the historical pages of our past. It has affected our lives and that of the creation at a more profound level. How can we target social economic violence without solving poverty and exclusion? How can we target institutional violence without transforming power relationships? Many people say that we are now living in a culture of violence; it has become a way of life, a part of the social, political and perhaps "spiritual" system in which we live.

We at the Youth in Church and Society desk have noted the increase of information and news being received from youth networks all over the world about violence. Such examples include the war in Kosovo, the vicious cycle of revenge in Palestine-Israel, the plight of abused children in Manila in the Philippines, and Bangkok in Thailand, the horrible stories of the attempted escape of women who are victims of sex trafficking in eastern Europe and Asia, and so on. News about the twenty-year-old activist shot at a demonstration of protest intended to be non-violent in Genoa, Italy, is only one story which makes our hearts grieve. But the stories do not end there.

People from all over the world who gathered at the WCC launching of DOV say "NO" to violence in all its forms. And so do we. We are youth for peace and not for violence. We believe our commitment to join this campaign does not stop only in the ending of violence. For God's promise is more than a violence-free life. God, through Jesus Christ, offered shalom. So where do we start?

José Ramos-Horta, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, said in an interview, "One practical step is to talk about the need of reconciliation and forgiveness."¹ True repentance leads to reconciliation and forgiveness. It brings forth peace, a gift from God through Jesus' life, death and resurrection and is a way of being and living. God will "guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lk 1:79).

Therefore, "Why only now?" is not an idle question but rather a question of urgency. We can no longer just listen and watch. We need to not only seriously talk about it but also to commit ourselves to God's calling of peace. In addition, we need to take action against violence that will lead toward peace and justice where life is respected and celebrated. In his great religious meditation *De Profundis*, Oscar Wilde says that the problem is not in what we do but in what we become.

In this issue, you will hear from various young people from around the world. Their prophetic voice denounces violence while pursuing justice and pronouncing hope of healing. This is Good News. They have chosen themes and topics close to their hearts. Some have written from personal experience, while others have written with the intention of contributing and participating in solutions. Together with the writers, we do not claim to have a comprehensive analysis of the causes and solutions of violence, as it has become complex and sometimes so overwhelming that it is even difficult to imagine partial solutions. But rather, we would like to share our testimonies and seek wider connection toward honest dialogue and equal partnership in an attempt to seek and pursue peace. We invite you to reflect on these articles and stories and move toward hope and action that will lead to the transformation of communities. We would be grateful to receive your comments and/or reflections on items or programs related to peace that would inspire us to continue our work together in building relationships and incarnating our fellowship with the Triune God. Let us join together in prayer:

God, you are the God of life,
Transform us in the depths of our hearts
Into people, through whom Your peace
Is carried out into Your world.

Send your Spirit into the hearts of those
Who are captured in the net of violence
Be it as perpetrators or as victims
And let us never give up the search
For the chance to talk to them.

(Croatia)²

¹Echoes: *Justice, Peace and Creation News*, vol. 18/2000, p. 36.

²John A. Carden, *Procession Prayers: Meditations and Prayers from Around the World*, WCC Publications, Geneva 1998, p. 66.



Tita
Valeriano
Lucas
Veira Sand



As presented to the 2001 LWF Council meeting

Seventeen young people representing churches from the Lutheran communion and ecumenical guests attended the Pre-Council Workshop (PCW) in Geneva, from the 9th to the 11th of June, 2001. Countries that were represented were: Kenya, South Africa, Central African Republic, Angola, Switzerland, France, Poland, Denmark, Great Britain, Palestine, Argentina and the United States. During this workshop we centered on the theme, *"Let us seek peace and pursue it."*

We participated in an interactive presentation by Fr. Kwame Labi, an Orthodox priest from Ghana

Young hands holding a metal cross made out of a used bullet cartridge from the civil war in Liberia.

Photo by
Christa
Rothenbühler
OCS/LWF



currently working with the World Council of Churches. We shared our stories of violence and healing, together with our frustrations and grief, noting that each participant's story varied in context. The vicious cycle of violence, with its root causes and symptomatic effects, surfaced again and again.

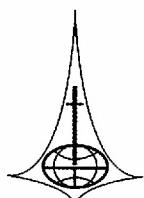
Although violence is not a new phenomenon, we noted a quantitative and qualitative increase in the last decade. God's creation is continuously threatened: An angry, frustrated Palestine child is killed after throwing stones at an Israeli tank. In cities like Paris and Warsaw, where there seems no opportunity or hope for a better future, some

persons turn to criminal actions in despair. In the northern provinces of South Africa, many women are tormented from violence both physically and psychologically. There are even some so-called "agents of peace" who exercise violence. Some governments continue to kill people – especially youth – people whom in those poor neighborhoods they were supposed to protect. Today, unfortunately, violence continues to be a reality whether we like it or not. Clearly, violence is not just something that we see on the television screen or that we hear about on the radio. It is something in our neighborhoods, in our families, and sometimes even in our churches. *If we continue to avoid the core issues of violence or simply discuss it, we will lose the credibility of our Christian communion, which is based in the liberating and loving message of the gospel.* Conceptual discussions are important in order for the church's role in co-creation and advocacy for a Christian community to be clear. However, we encourage member churches to move beyond discussions such as these. Where is the church in all of this? What can the youth of today contribute to the church and society in which we are full, active members?

What, then, is our proposal for the church in the 21st century?

- *Open up our churches more.* Many young people today feel that we as a church often have tightly closed doors. Some churches are caught with internal conflicts, and refuse to listen or become defensive towards persons challenging it. Other churches are taking little, or not enough, responsibility and action against conflicts around the world. Jesus invites all people to come to the table He has prepared. This would mean for us to bring the church out to the people, and take the initiative to bridge the gaps between them; whether they are separated by matters of church or violence.

- *Name the violence and establish clear definitions.* The PCW participants understand and urge others to understand that in order to approach the phenomenon of violence and strategies to combat it, a comprehensive working definition of what violence is needs to be established. This would provide us – representatives of member churches from numerous countries and cultures – with a concrete foundation on which to understand how to respond to violence effectively and positively. Clear working definitions for peace, justice, and reconciliation are also important to include here. For example, *to have a reflection on*



the definition and implications of "just war" and counter-violence (which is sometimes defined as use of force to resist violence). Violence manifested in any form is destructive to the body of Christ and all creation which we have inherited. The "Churches Say 'No' to Violence against Women" document is a very good start to equip member churches in pursuing peace, but how about violence against youth and children?

• Denounce all forms of violence and advocate for healing. Live out our daily baptism into the body of Christ by claiming our prophetic voice and denounce violence rather than avoid controversial issues and situations where conflict exists. We need to stand up for what we believe in: truth and justice. As Christians, we can advocate for healing of the community and creation, involving our spirituality. Churches must serve as catalysts for peace movements and mediators between conflicts wherever they may be.

A concrete example of this would be to involve youth, as active and very present members of Lutheran churches everywhere, in peace processes, for example, serving as mediators. Authentic confession and forgiveness of what we have done and not done is the first step in the healing process, in order to serve one another as instruments or agents of peace and reconciliation.

• Target the root causes of violence. Violence cannot be properly approached nor overcome without targeting its roots. Rather than talking about violence abstractly, we need to target con-

crete and real issues, starting with our own environment, ourselves and our church in daily life. Underneath all manifestations of violence lie unresolved combinations of core issues: fear, guilt, anger, rage, doubt, control, and power. On the other hand, vicious cycle of roots and symptoms are apparent in the lack of equality, justice, and protection of human rights.

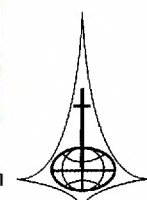
• Provide opportunities for education and networking. Continue to support and create programs and partnerships which provide space for learning from one another about how we address violence in our own contexts. A concrete example of this would be to encourage member churches to include in Christian Education, curriculum on culture of peace and overcoming violence and to create and support a regional and global (youth) network in addressing the same. This PCW for youth has helped us become more confident to address violence when we go back home. Through collective studies such as these, we help each other to have a greater and more positive impact on addressing violence.

These are all important challenges for the church to address. In order to be a true Christian church it is imperative to note that we need to proclaim the Gospel in words and in deeds. This means doing what we say, not just saying what to do. True peace begins within ourselves and is to be celebrated in the fellowship of others.



LWF Council
Meeting 2001
Stewards

Photo by
T. Valeriano
YICAS
DMD/LWF



IN CHRIST, A HEALED COMMUNITY IS A PEACEFUL COMMUNITY.

The LWF Pre-Council Youth Workshop takes place every year before the LWF Council meeting.

Council Resolution on Youth in Church and Society (2001 Council Minutes, 13.5):

The Program Committee had received the Report of the Pre-Council Youth Workshop (Appendix to Exhibit 13) held immediately prior to the Council meeting with the theme "Let Us Seek Peace and Pursue It." It had noted with appreciation the proposals for the church in the twenty-first century and thanked God for the presence and powerful message of the seventeen young people who had participated in the workshop. The Committee was of the opinion that young people were helpful in shaping the spirituality of the churches' future. Representatives of the young people were invited to share their message with the Council.

Upon the recommendation of the Program Committee, the Council VOTED:

- to receive the Report of the Pre-Council Youth Workshop with appreciation; and
- to request the General Secretary to distribute the Report to all member churches for study throughout the communion.

We would like to receive feedback from you, as well as ideas for specific action and implementation.

- How does the introductory description relate to your local context?
- What are the forms of violence present in that context?
- How can some of these proposals be implemented?
- How can we take action together, both locally and globally, as a communion?

Your reactions to this year's message would be highly appreciated!

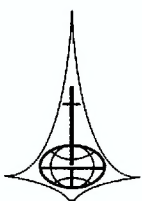
Please send your comments to:

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German and Spanish versions of the message are also available from this address.

Stewards during the presentation of the message at the Program Committee for Mission and Development meeting during the 2001 LWF Council meeting in Geneva.

Photo by
Kenn Ward
OCS/LWF



"¿VIOLENCIA? ¿DE QUÉ ME ESTÁ HABLANDO? ESO ES PROBLEMA DE ELLOS..."

Por Lucas Veira Sand
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida, Argentina

Violencia... todos hemos oído hablar de ella; y más aún, como jóvenes, nos hemos visto implicados en ella. Pero ¿de qué hablamos cuando la nombramos? Esta palabra, tan amplia, abarcadora y fuerte, se relaciona con algunos de los aspectos más cruciales y vívidos de la historia y la experiencia humana.

Es evidente que violencia implica mucho más que "el golpe del palo por la cabeza" -aquella imagen de la violencia física directa. Compone un complejo tejido de relaciones sociales, marcado, construido, reproducido, resistido... Tomemos una situación: Un comando "terrorista" armado de un país de Medio Oriente secuestra un avión de línea en Europa Occidental, en reclamo de la liberación de manifestantes prisioneros de una nación vecina que fueron llevados a otra nación, también cercana. Estos prisioneros habían arrojado piedras contra las autoridades locales, y se supone que guardaban poderoso armamento. Una dama que viaja en la clase business del avión teme por sus operaciones financieras en América, las cuales se verán afectadas por la caída de medio punto en las tasas de interés en caso de llegar horas más tarde. Cuando ese tiempo transcurre, la dama comienza entonces a temer de una vez por su propia vida...

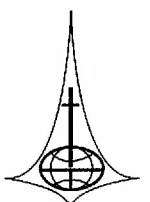
Luego de volar largas y desesperantes horas, el avión y sus ocupantes llegan a un país de África del norte -ex colonia de otro país que se encuentra aún más al norte. En ese lugar, muchos niños y niñas no suelen usar agua cristalina. El proyecto de desarrollo para potabilizar agua, en el cual trabajaban sus padres, cayó debido a que las actividades económicas que sustentaban la región (extracción de minerales e industria textil) habían cesado. Eso había sucedido después que la principal empresa interesada en esas actividades se retirara, al haberse agotado los minerales preciosos y descender la cotización del grupo que contenía a tal organización. Dicho grupo involucraba, también, a empresas occidentales dedicadas a extracciones de petróleo en zonas cercanas al lugar de origen de las personas del comando terrorista. Un grupo de turistas de un país asiático se conmociona por la situación de estos niños, y se preocupan por la higiene: deciden enviarles grandes cantidades de jabón perfumado.

En el aeropuerto cercano donde aterrizó nuestro avión, el grupo comando terrorista decide entregarse y liberar a los rehenes, después de tensas negociaciones y de un alerta internacional. Se les promete un juicio justo, en un país "libre" que no había intervenido directamente en la situación aún, y que contempla la pena de muerte entre sus leyes. Todas las "víctimas" son liberadas ilesas, aunque algunas de ellas aún se encuentran tomadas por un esperable ataque de nervios. Luego de semejante epopeya, muchos reciben días de vacaciones en sus trabajos y pasajes libres a cargo de la empresa aérea involucrada en el incidente. Una niña y su padre, junto a otros pasajeros, se agrupan y deciden descansar en una paradisíaca isla de Oceanía, donde un poderoso dictador extranjero -que no visitó nunca el lugar- invierte dinero en los bancos locales, hoteles y medios de comunicación. Lejos de toda amenaza visible, la pequeña niña mira a su padre y le dice: "Qué lindo que es acá papi, no hay gente con pistolas, no hay gente mala".

Como ejercicio temático, podríamos preguntarnos en cuáles de estas situaciones, relacionadas entre sí, existe acaso ausencia de actos violentos. Probablemente en muy pocas. Y esto nos lleva hacia otro terreno, aquel que trata de la relación de la violencia con la experiencia humana.

Vemos como la violencia está impregnada profundamente en nuestro actuar, hasta el punto en que muchas veces es ejercida inconsciente y colectivamente. Y de ello somos responsables desde el principio como sujetos humanos, mucho antes que código moral alguno dictamine sobre el bien y el mal o la culpabilidad e inocencia por sus consecuencias.

Cabe decirlo así: la violencia existe más bien en relación con nosotros que como una entidad propia y demoníaca en sí. No se despliega como "cosa" por fuera de los seres humanos, sino que nos involucra. La violencia, como ocurre también con el poder, sólo existe en acto, en ejercicio. Y en tanto acto, tiene consecuencias. Por sobre todas las cosas, está siempre en relación - en las relaciones humanas. Tiene que ver con los hombres y las mujeres, con nosotros. No está por fuera: nos es intrínseco. Y esto nos diferencia una vez más como criaturas responsables por el cuidado de la creación de Dios.



Manifestantes no consiguen soluciones optimas durante una huelga de Hambre en El Salvador.

Photo: Oficina para la region Latino-americana y del Caribe, DMD/FLM

Podemos encontrar varios obstáculos para comprender los fenómenos de violencia. Uno de ellos, como mencioné, es separarla (como si fuera un objeto) de la responsabilidad y el ejercicio humano. Decimos responsabilidad no cómo algo similar a la culpa, sino como una actitud de reconocer y asumir las consecuencias de acciones y decisiones, incluso si no lo hacemos voluntariamente. Otro obstáculo implica naturalizarla. O asimilarlo a la agresividad que se manifiesta en

la violencia toma distintas formas a lo largo de la historia y los diversos grupos humanos. Y no sólo en cómo se ejerce y se transmite, sino también en su manera de ser pensada. Los fenómenos de violencia, en este marco, son un resultado, un producto de la experiencia social; fenómenos que han ido modificándose, extendiéndose y haciéndose más sutiles y complejos, tanto a nuestros ojos como a nuestra piel.

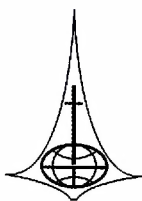
Usualmente, tendemos a horrorizarnos cuando escuchamos sobre violencia. Y ni que hablar si la vivimos. Es obvio, ya que involucra una gran carga de tensión emotiva y situaciones límite para nuestra vida. Existen también muchas ocasiones en las cuales resulta más complicado precisar "violencia". Tomemos otra figura, que ha sido expuesta en varias oportunidades: La esperable reacción de un pueblo o grupo social sometido contra sus opresores ¿constituye un acto de violencia? Intentaré tomar posición ante esto. En efecto, tal reacción, justa -y por que no, oportuna- también implica violencia. Aunque de seguro, no con aquellos aspectos negativos con los cuales la pensamos, sino desde una acción liberadora. En este caso, no se manifestaría como un fenómeno aislado, sino que involucraría lo que podemos denominar también una "escalada de violencia": una reacción contra otra actitud violenta que la precedió, o cadenas en espiral de violencia. Nuevamente, somos responsables, de la perpetuación o de la transformación.

Para intentar un abordaje de los fenómenos de violencia, podemos encontrar al menos tres aspectos que los caracterizan. Por un lado, como ya dijimos, la violencia y sus formas son más bien un producto de la experiencia social, construidas y sostenidas por las relaciones humanas, más que una determinación o un designio maléfico e inmutable. Por otro, las formas y las expresiones que ésta toma varían según el marco histórico, y más aún en su forma de ser pensada. Y porque la violencia es cada vez más sutil y duradera, transmitida culturalmente, podemos hablar de un aspecto simbólica, esa que implica la exclusiva facultad humana del lenguaje. Es esta dimensión también la que permite ver y sentir como la violencia es pensada, concebida, caracterizada, expresada y transmitida.

El aspecto social... pensemos en todas las interacciones humanas donde podemos llegar a encontrar actos de violencia: sirva el ejemplo anterior. Y también las variaciones históricas: imaginemos, en la Francia del siglo XVI, el acto cotidianamente aceptable del encierro de los



todos los animales como potencial para conservarse y conservar su especie. Naturalizar la violencia implica también concebirla como inmutable y determinada biológicamente. Por el contrario,



"locos" en barcos a la deriva¹, comparado con el violento agravio que constituía la omisión de la cita de honores al rey y a Dios en la introducción de todo nuevo libro. Hoy en día todo esto sería inadmisibles; así también, notamos una creciente sensibilidad contra la segregación racial: siguiendo algunos de los informes presentados en la última sesión Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la ONU, podríamos decir que esa situación en Sudáfrica ha "mejorado" en los últimos quince años, aunque no necesariamente en Ruanda, al tiempo que las realidades tanto en Indonesia como en Estados Unidos de América siguen siendo críticas. Durante dicha sesión, las delegaciones de países de Europa Occidental parecieron ser quienes más han promovido la defensa de derechos humanos; sin embargo, focalizaron sus señalamientos en otras regiones del mundo y no en la propia. Por el otro lado, una persona de África con una posición decisiva en la temática de racismo, considera a tal fenómeno como exclusivo de los países de Europa y América, por lo cual no incentiva investigaciones sobre denuncias provenientes de otros continentes sobre ese tema.

También, pero no menos, es importante la creciente exclusión de los pobres, aquellos que al no tener capacidad de consumo son frecuentemente olvidados. Es además aún sostenida, en muchos casos, una fuerte segregación hacia las personas por su orientación sexual, con argumentos tales como la "contra-natura" (tan sólido como aquel de que los "locos" eran seres demoníacos). Y aquí llegamos nuevamente al aspecto simbólica: no hace falta ver a gente deportada por su orientación sexual para experimentar violencia. Es perceptible ya desde la imposición de ciertos modelos o patrones (patterns) que prescriben formas de ser o de comportarse como figuras ideales (en los casos menos severos) o como la opción única y exclusiva (en los peores casos). Y este tipo, más sutil y desarrollado, se ramifica a través de todas nuestras instituciones, incluyendo las escuelas, y por qué no, las iglesias.

Desde niños somos también educados en diferencias de clase social, de género (representaciones), alentados a competir, y somos predestinados tempranamente a roles futuros del "mundo adulto [del trabajo]". ¿Cuántas veces, al enseñarnos a escribir con renglones, tuvimos también que aprender a respetarlos en los dibujos en los cuales nos decían que el cielo se pintaba de azul, el sol amarillo, y la piel en muchos casos solo rosada? La creatividad y la capacidad de transformación también puede ser apacigua-

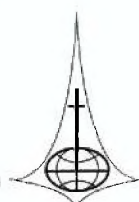
das, simbólica y silenciosamente, y no por ello con menos efectividad y violencia, que en este caso se encuentran institucionalizadas.

¿Y dónde estamos nosotros? La violencia ya no será "ella", sino nosotros como actores responsables, potenciales agentes de cambio y llamados a denunciar y superar los actos de violencia que oprimen y se reproducen. Actores responsables no sólo individualmente, sino también en forma colectiva y comunitaria. La historia, las organizaciones, los grupos, las empresas, los estados, y también las iglesias... están formados, contruidos, escritos y sostenidos por seres humanos, no por hormigas. Ciertamente es que estos procesos históricos y sociales muchas veces nos exceden. Pero también radica en nosotros - en tanto actores de ellos - la capacidad de desestimar, reproducir o transformar los fenómenos de violencia, capacidad que está siempre en relación al cuidado de la creación de Dios y de la dignidad humana. Desde las iglesias, una responsabilidad asumida a través de relaciones de camaradería - comunión con Dios - y dirigida hacia el mundo actual, debe tomar en cuenta el contexto de acción.

Asumir responsabilidad, volviendo nuestras acciones y perspectivas más abarcadoras, nos impulsará también a velar por el cuidado de la creación de Dios. La iglesia -su gente- puede alentar un poderoso impacto a través de las relaciones de sus agentes, a través de su comunión, dirigido no a los lamentos del tipo "esto está fuera de nuestro alcance/no tiene que ver con nosotros", sino a la responsabilidad, la asunción.

Lucas Veira Sand fue interno en la Oficina de Juventud de la FLM. Es graduado en Psicología, Universidad de Buenos Aires.

¹Historia de la locura en la época clásica, cap. I Stultifera Navis. 1961, FCE, México



"VIOLENCE? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THAT'S NOT MY PROBLEM..."

Lucas Veira Sand
United Evangelical Lutheran Church, Argentina

Violence... we've all heard about it, and what is more, as youth we've even found ourselves involved in it. Some churches are concerned about this, and many people have already written a lot about it. But what do we mean when we call it by name? This impressive and strong word relates to some of the most crucial and intense aspects of human experience and history.

It should be clear that violence involves much more than "a punch in the face"—an image of direct physical violence. Violence comprises a complex array of social relationships, which are diverse, built up, copied, and resisted... This brings us to the relationship between violence and our everyday human experience.

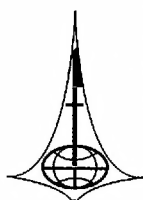
We may stumble across some obstacles when we try to understand the phenomena of violence. One of them is about disassociating violence, as if it were an outside object, separate from human responsibility and action. This responsibility does not imply guilt but rather acknowledges and makes us aware of the consequences of our decisions and actions. Another obstacle is that of understanding violence as natural, a never-changing tendency, biologically determined—like aggressivity in animals. But violence has taken on many forms throughout history, as have the dynamics of societies and cultures. This is evident not only in the way it manifests itself but also in the way it is understood and defined. Within this framework, the phenomena of violence constitute the outcome of social relationships that have undergone change, expansion and have become subtler and more complex, as much to our eyes as to our skin and overall sensitivity.

Some points deserve consideration. As I have said, violence in its different forms is shaped, and evolves, through social experience (relationships) rather than as a demonic curse. It ranges in form from domestic violence, e.g., husband and wife insulting one another, to structural social economic violence, e.g., the silent increase of poverty in many "forgotten" South American provinces. These forms vary throughout history, especially in the ways they are understood: In France in the sixteenth century, it was

considered acceptable to confine so-called "possessed" people to deserted ships on rivers. Whereas, omitting a tribute to God and the king in the introduction of any published work was considered an extreme offense. Nowadays, both would be deemed unacceptable. Concern over issues such as racism is increasing. According to discussion and reports from the latest United Nations Commission on Human Rights session, the racial situation in South Africa has seen some improvement in the past fifteen years. But the same cannot be said of Rwanda. The racial situations in Indonesia and the United States of America remain critical, although in different ways. During one of the sessions, the delegations from western Europe actually seemed to advocate for human rights but talked only of all regions but their own. Whereas a person from an African country with key involvement in the "elimination of racism" issue, refused to follow up on denunciations from Asia and Africa, affirming racism to be only an Euro-American phenomenon.

Increasing exclusion of poor people, those without consumer capacity, continues to take its toll. Furthermore, segregation of people of different sexual orientation is still extant from North America to the Far East. Arguments such as "counter-nature" (as strong as those directed at "insane" people as being "demon-possessed") are often heard. So speaking at a symbolical level: We don't need to go as far as seeing people deported because of their sexual orientation in order to experience violence—that is, violence experienced as an imposition of certain behavioral patterns according to an "ideal" (in some cases) or unique (at worst) norm. This form of coercion, more subtle and developed, exists throughout and within our institutions, including schools and even our churches. How many times in childhood did we learn to write keeping to the lines, painting the sky only in blue, the sun only in yellow and skin in only one "appropriate" color? Creativity and the capacity to change can be suppressed, both silently and symbolically, in a way that is no less effective or forceful.

Violence is inherent to our own actions and frequently inflicted unconsciously and/or collectively. As human beings, we are responsible for that violence and for the consequences from its very outset—even before any moral code sets up rules about good and evil, guilt or innocence.



It can be said that violence lives in a close relationship with us rather than as a separate demonic entity. It does not exist independently from human beings but involves us all. It is not something "out there"; it is intrinsic to institutions and human beings in their relationship to one another. Human beings are special creatures, accountable to God in caring for the whole creation. Church people can experience this responsibility through partner relationships and actions in today's world—taking into consideration each specific context, noting that God heads the table where all Christians are called to share communion as equals.

Assuming accountability, aligning our actions and perspectives, will help us advocate for God's creation. The church—its people—can encourage empowerment through relationships, communion, and responsibility rather than perpetuating an attitude of "it does not concern us" and having to live with regrets.

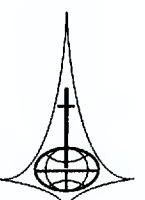
Lucas Veira Sand was the recent intern at the LWF DMD Youth in Church and Society desk in Geneva, Switzerland. He holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Buenos Aires. His article is translated from the original Spanish.

¹Historia de la locura en la época clásica, cap. I Stultifera Navis. 1961, FCE, México



"Turning our backs on realities in life narrows our perspectives and world views. Do we notice what's around us?" A man walking alone by a modern-style building.

Photo by Lucas Veira Sand
Grüell Park, Barcelona, Spain
YICAS/DMD/LWF



STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE HITTING WITHOUT BEING IN STRIKING DISTANCE

Silke Lechner
Protestant Student Christian Movement of Germany

When talking about violence we often think of physical violence—wars, ethnic conflicts, husbands beating their wives and vice versa, parents beating their children and so on. But violence is more than that. Maybe the following definition could be used: Someone is violent if s/he makes another person suffer. In this definition violence is not limited to physical violence, and does not imply that the person being injured is standing within striking distance of their offender. One of the most crucial areas of violence we have to overcome is structural violence that makes countries of the South¹, and therefore its people, remain poor. Why is it that many countries in Africa and Latin America have been struggling for years to improve their economic situation? It is not all about mismanagement in these countries. The majority of causes for these countries' poverty lies in the policies adopted by the rich countries—the countries of the global North.² I would like to draw attention to three points that I consider as structural violence toward the countries of the South:

- **Foreign Debt.** This is probably the issue of injustice toward the South that we have all heard about most in recent years within the context of the Jubilee 2000 campaign. Many of the heavily indebted poor countries have to pay more than 30 percent of their export earnings to reduce their debt. They are trapped in a vicious cycle. To reduce their debt they often have to take on more credit which of course means added interest and a never-ending pay-off. But is it simply that countries have to pay back what they have borrowed? Certainly, we should stick to the principle that borrowed money has to be paid back. But in the case that a country is literally bankrupt and below the subsistence level, meaning it cannot nourish its people, should we not keep to the same standards that we have in many countries of the North, namely, grant people a basic level of subsistence? Secondly, in the case of illegitimate debt (such as loans to dictators) I think these should not be paid back at all. If, for instance, the US company Westinghouse builds a nuclear plant in the Philippines in an earthquake zone at the foot of a volcano, why should the US bank that financed such a dangerous nuclear plant with no chance of solvency get its money back?³

A placard reads "Justice, my God" during a demonstration against privatization of resources in El Salvador.

Photo: DMD/LWF regional desk for Latin America and the Caribbean.



¹ Global South is a political term referring to the world's less economically developed countries.

² Global North - the world's wealthy, industrialized countries.

³ The Morong (Bataan) nuclear power plant was built in 1974 and cost the Philippines USD 2.1 billion.



• **One-sided liberal trade.** Although the countries of the North tend to stress the importance of the dogma of classical liberal economic theory—that markets have to open and governments are not to intervene it is actually they who do not apply it. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) usually forces countries applying for credit to open up their markets and abolish import taxes. Consequently, the countries of the South are an excellent trading place for Europe, the United States of America and Japan. I am currently living in Ecuador and if I wanted to I could live off German products only! Maybe the dilemma is that countries of the North never have to undergo structural adjustment programs as imposed by the IMF. The market of the European Union (EU), for instance, could be called anything but open. Agricultural products in the EU are heavily subsidized so that those from other countries, although theoretically cheaper, do not have a chance. The EU follows a policy of protection while at the same time expecting markets of the South to be open to them.

• **Unfair terms of trade.** Why is it that the cost of products like coffee or sugar has not risen during the last thirty years or so while the cost of every other product has increased “x” amount of times? Countries of the North (and its people) are not ready to pay fair prices for products from the South while adjusting the prices of their own products to specific conditions.

These issues as such may not appear to belong in an article on violence. But considering the consequences of these facts of world economy we are getting closer to the point. We are not just talking about numbers or economic policies; we are talking about people.

People — who cannot send their children to school because tuition fees are too high for them or because these children have to work to supplement the family's budget. In 1999 alone, 300,000 children left school in Ecuador. Most of them are now on the streets, polishing shoes or selling chewing gum.

People — who do not have access to sufficient health care as their state has to service its debt (and thus finance the North) while being unable to spend much on the health system. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) 17 million people die every year due to lack of access to necessary medicines.

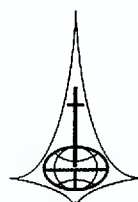
People — who have to feed themselves on leftovers, scavenging through other people's rubbish. Manila, in the Philippines, has a dump site called Payatas that is “home” to around 60,000 people. And,

People — children, women and men, who die every day, every second, because they do not have enough food.

These situations are a direct consequence of the three points I mentioned above, a direct consequence of Northern politics, of the government of my own country, Germany, and of all other countries of the North. I call this structural violence, and although we are not within striking distance of the suffering or dying people, it is our countries (seen from a Northern perspective) that are striking them and committing an act of violence.

Is this issue of structural economic violence something young people are interested in? Are they working on the complex political and economic issue of North-South relations? From my experience, I would say “yes” and give three recent examples, all related to the Jubilee 2000 campaign.

• **What do you want? Drop the debt!** This was shouted out by thousands of young people (together with thousands of “young at hearts”) during the G8-Summit 1998, which took place in Cologne, Germany. The German Jubilee campaign had organized a huge demonstration, a human chain, to demand a debt-free start for all poor and heavily indebted countries from the gathered leaders of the richest industrial countries. Around 35,000 people followed the call of the Jubilee campaign—the majority of the protesters being young people. They came from all over Europe (and even beyond)—there were hundreds from Britain and Sweden, for example. My organization, the Protestant Student Christian Movement of Germany,⁴ organized a seminar parallel to the G8-Summit. With more than sixty students from twelve countries (Northern and Southern) we discussed “The Debt-Crisis and its Social Effects on the Younger Generation.” Through this seminar we created a North-South dialogue which proved that many young people are interested in dealing with the issue of structural violence.



• These were students. But what about younger people under twenty years of age? In my experience a lot of people in this age group are interested. Every year at Pentecost, the Lutheran churches of my home region organize a big camp with around 200 young people aged between thirteen and eighteen years. In 1999, I introduced the aims of the Jubilee 2000 campaign there and held a workshop on the economic and social situation of people in the South. The popular saying that people in that age group have no interest whatsoever in political issues was proved wrong! Many participants in the camp came to ask me questions, made comments and, in some cases, were also critical about the campaign's aims. Many more were very keen to add their signature to the petition calling for cancellation of the poorest countries' debt.

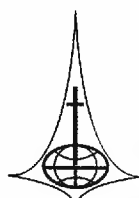
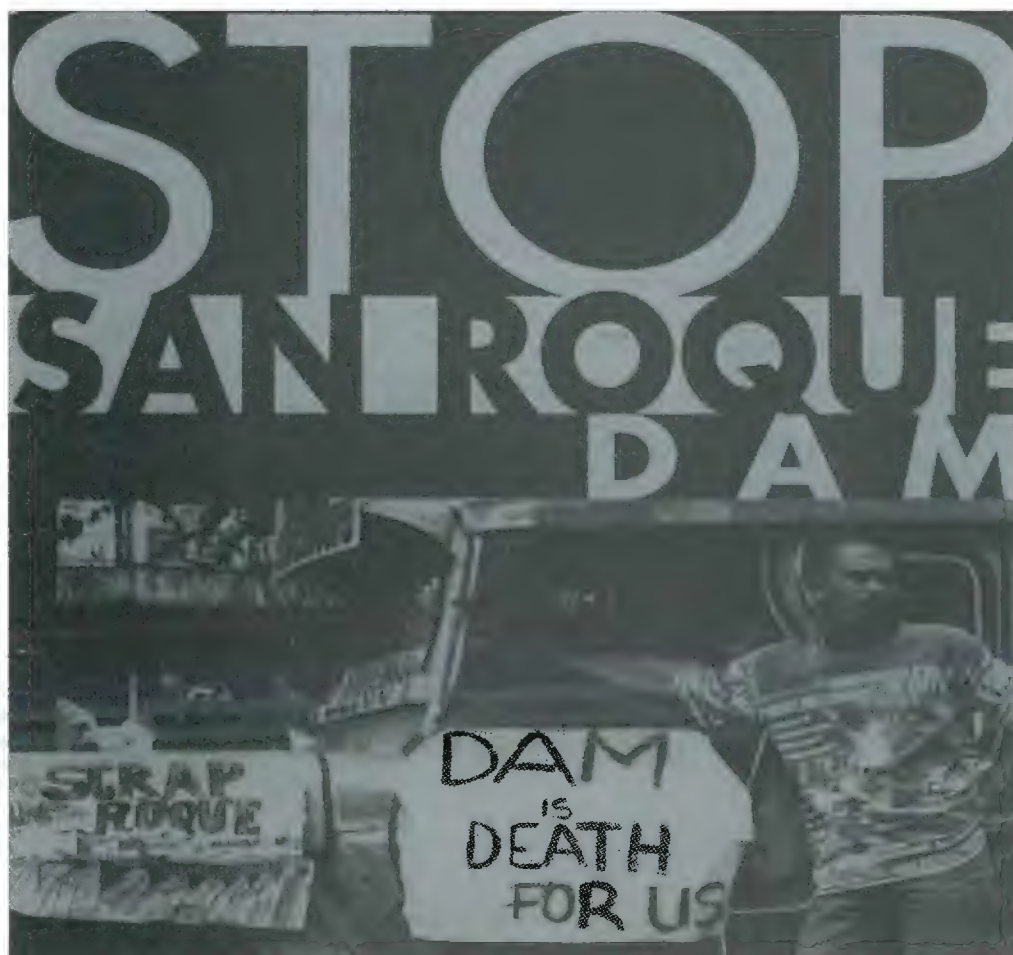
• During the summer of 2000, youth from the same age group demonstrated their interest in yet another way. In parallel with EXPO 2000 the "Evangelical Youth" (Evangelische Jugend) organized a youth camp called Jam-City. There, postcards were made available addressed to German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder asking him to cancel the poorest countries' debt.

The exact number of postcards sent is unknown but a couple of hundred participants in the youth camp took part in the political protest.

These are some examples from my personal experience, chosen because it is those I know best. I also know that there are young people all over the world working for the Jubilee campaign, working on the debt issue. Contrary to popular belief, this shows that young people are interested in getting to know about North-South issues, about structural violence as committed by the North. They are interested if we motivate them, and if we do not automatically join other people in saying, "Young people of today are disinterested in politics." I am convinced this issue of structural violence is one of the biggest challenges of our time. Above all, it is our responsibility as Christians, as young Christians, to extend our hand and try to keep the Northern governments from "striking people" in the South.

Silke Lechner is an intern with the World Student Christian Federation's Latin America office in Quito, Ecuador. Please send your comments to silkelechner@gmx.net

Flyer from a very recent campaign against the construction of a dam in the Philippines that will displace 35,000 indigenous people.



De Jules Ilunga Ngoy, Agent de Liaison, Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne au Congo

La jeunesse marginalisée est-elle vouée à la perdition? Lorsqu'une personne est violente, selon qu'elle suive certaines formes de pensée, elle finit par se soumettre et accepter cette condition de vie. Dans quelle mesure peut-on justifier cette opinion?

En effet, dans ce contexte, nous voulons présenter ici la vie que mènent les enfants de la communauté à laquelle nous appartenons. Cette vie a bien des lacunes si on considère cette « subtile » violence infligée à la jeunesse aujourd'hui.

Dans notre société, à travers les âges, les droits des enfants sont bafoués. Ce qui est reconnu comme les besoins de l'enfant c'est entre autre de lui donner à manger, de le scolariser et de l'habiller. Dans bien des cas, on ne pense jamais offrir à l'enfant l'occasion de se divertir. C'est pourtant à partir de loisirs, d'occupations distrayantes, de jeux que l'on peut déceler les aptitudes que l'enfant possède pour le guider dans une vie disciplinée selon les facilités que lui apportent ses parents. Dans notre communauté, les parents attachent une moindre importance à fournir du matériel récréatif et des jeux aux enfants. Ceux-ci sont voués à leur triste sort. Pour surmonter cette situation, les enfants créent personnellement les divers matériels de jeux ou tout simplement les jouets.

Cette pratique a créé une habitude dans la vie des enfants et justifie une démission claire des parents face à leurs responsabilités. Pour les enfants; c'est devenu alors la norme, celle de se fabriquer eux-mêmes leurs jouets et à moindre coût.

Sachons dénoncer cette « subtile » violence que nous connaissons depuis très longtemps dans notre communauté et qui n'a rien à voir avec la pauvreté. Car si les enfants fabriquent leurs jouets, les parents en fabriqueraient beaucoup mieux en les mettant à disposition des enfants d'une façon ciblée. Parce qu'à travers les diverses occupations surveillées des enfants, les parents découvrirait leurs capacités, leurs inclinaisons et on saurait les orienter, les guider dans la vie. Les enfants ont accepté sans sourciller cette attitude de refus des devoirs des parents. En cas d'échec d'encadrement le résultat amer est une augmentation des enfants de la rue, ayant bien sûr des parents vivants.

L'enfant a besoin d'un encadrement sous toutes ses formes. Parce que cela lui manque, il a le courage de se prendre en charge lui-même, bien que dans sa vie la distraction devrait occuper une vaste place. C'est pourquoi les échecs sont si

nombreux et s'enregistrent dans le camp des enfants laissés face à leurs problèmes. Quel avenir si triste pour cette jeunesse !

Dans nos églises les activités des jeunes sont toujours de moindre importance au vu des adultes. L'enfant qui grandit devient un jeune, lui qui était autrefois sans estimé, de quelle manière peut-il encore réhabiliter ses conditions de vie ? Ainsi l'enfant qu'on a vu créer seul ses jouets, jouer en solitaire sans orientation aucune, grandit; on remarque alors qu'étant adolescent il évolue dans le même sens que quand il était enfant.

Les jeunes s'organisent à autofinancer leurs activités indépendamment du soutien de l'Eglise, mais à travers de moindres cotisations. Il faut aussi souligner le manque d'encadrement pastoral, ce qui entraîne que la voix des jeunes n'est pas considérée, voire sous-estimée dans l'assemblée. Selon la conception erronée des aînés, celui qui est jeune n'est pas éloigné de l'enfant, raison pour laquelle il ne peut pas avancer d'idées constructives.

Même la poule couve et protège ses petits jusqu'à une maturité certaine. Or, si les enfants, les jeunes étaient suffisamment encadrés et protégés dans notre communauté, on attacherait d'une façon ou d'une autre plus d'importance à leurs voix, à leurs cris et à leurs préoccupations.

D'où celui qui s'occupe à soutenir la jeunesse garantit l'avenir de la société. Car si l'enfant, si le jeune s'avère non encadré, c'est une ruine pour la communauté qui n'épargnera pas la jeunesse de l'Eglise.



Jeunes Luthériens se rencontrent au Liberia.

Photo YICAS/DMD/FLM



Jules Ilunga Ngoy, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo (*Summary from French*)

Are young people on the fringes of society doomed? If people have been subjected to violence, they tend to follow certain thought patterns, resigning themselves to a hopeless situation. To what extent is this view justified? We are going to look at the life of children in the community to which we belong, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Life here has certainly not been kind, if we consider the covert violence inflicted on young people today.

Children's rights are flouted. Children need food, clothing, shelter and schooling but they also need an affectionate environment, the time and a place to play. Very often, children are given no opportunity for leisure and recreation. Yet it is through recreation and play that a child's aptitudes and capacity for living and growing can be developed. Children are often left on their own so usually make their own "toys" and create their own "games"; the parents simply refuse to assume their responsibilities. This subtle form of violence has nothing to do with poverty and must be condemned.

Children need to be taken by the hand. Without parental guidance, they shift along on their own. So many children are left to their own devices, trying to cope with their problems. This results in more

street children even though their parents are living. In our churches, young people's activities are of minor importance in adult eyes. Neither consulted nor given due consideration as children, upon reaching adulthood they are left without a structure and continue to suffer from such lack of guidance. It seems as though their sad path is irrevocably traced. They have simply interiorized their parents' neglect.

Sometimes churches lack support for the youth ministry and young people are not listened to in assemblies. This would not be the case if children and young people were to be supported and protected in our community. Their voice, their concerns would be heard.

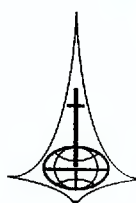
If children and young people are not given proper support, then the community will suffer, and the church—which plays a vital role in any community—will not be spared. To secure the future of society, we must support the young.

Jules Ilunga Ngoy is the LWF Youth Liaison in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

English translation and summary by Silviane Canedo Sandoz, LWF staff.



African youth developing their skills.
Photo YICAS/DMD/LWF



Por Rodolfo Olivera Obermöller
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida, Argentina

Quien es el joven? Al intentar abordar la temática "Los jóvenes superando la violencia", personalmente me referiría a la sociedad superando la violencia, ya que los jóvenes son sólo una pequeña muestra de cómo la sociedad está vuelta a la violencia. Normalmente, en nuestras sociedades, el joven es esa persona que nunca entiende nada y va siempre en contra de todo. Es esa persona a costa de la cual las cerveceras y las tabaquerías se hacen millones cada año. El joven es quien trata de vivir en una sociedad en la cual muchas veces no está incluido. La pobreza se hace cada vez más insostenible y los índices de violencia dentro de ésta van incrementando... Los jóvenes, juntos, tratan de sobrevivir en las peligrosas y "calientes" calles de grandes y pequeñas ciudades. Ahí hay que sobrevivir como se pueda. No hay posibilidad de dudar: antes que me maten, mato yo primero.

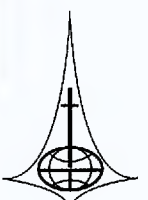
Más allá de excepciones, nuestra conducta está influenciada directamente por nuestro contexto social, del cual también se forma nuestra personalidad. Ahora, ¿qué pasa cuando no tenemos un contexto familiar u otra institución que nos enseñe a dar los primeros pasos? Ciertamente, aprenderemos a caminar, pero ¿de dónde habremos aprendido hacia dónde ir? Es esperable que los jóvenes seamos violentos si es lo que vemos y sufrimos todos los días.

Como podemos apreciar, suele ser muy fácil decir que los jóvenes están "corrompidos" o que son todos unos "drogadictos" y "delincuentes". Pero, ¿porqué no abandoné yo la escuela en todas las oportunidades que quise hacerlo? ¿Porqué pude rechazar y superar las oportunidades que tuve de convertirme en "alcohólico", "drogadicto" o "delincuente"? Estoy seguro que no fue porque soy una persona "sabia" o "inteligente", sino simplemente porque tuve la oportunidad de elegir y de saber que había más de un futuro esperándome, y que sólo iba a ser yo quien forjaría dicho futuro. Entonces, ¿qué es lo que pasa con los jóvenes a los que nadie les dijo que podían tener un futuro? ¿Quién le dio a otros jóvenes una posibilidad de elegir? ¿Acaso ellos "eligieron" educarse en las calles, dejar la escuela o meterse en drogas? No, no había elección. Esa es la realidad en muchas sociedades

actuales. Es demasiado fácil decir que ellos son "flojos" o que "no quieren surgir"; pero en la mayoría de los casos no hay a dónde ir. Vemos cómo en los países que no son "potencias mundiales" hay cada día menos trabajo y cómo las corporaciones intercontinentales enormes compran las pequeñas y medianas empresas locales.

Nuestra cultura postmoderna nos impone el mensaje de la eficacia y la inmediatez, todo tiene que ser para hoy y debe ser eficaz - de lo contrario, no sirve. Este fenómeno de la inmediatez se ve claramente en los nuevos movimientos religiosos, en los cuales muchas veces, vemos que el mensaje es la prosperidad para hoy, si tienes problemas, ven y ten fe, que tanto tu enfermedad como tus problemas serán solucionados. Sin ir en desmedro de la fuerza de la fe ni de la vitalidad de la esperanza, sabemos que la cosa no es tan fácil. Dios nos regala y siembra la fe en nosotros mediante su gracia, pero depende de nosotros cómo cultivamos esa fe y para qué la utilizamos. La fe en Jesucristo nos da esperanza y fuerza para vivir el día a día, y el Espíritu Santo nos ayuda a levantarnos una y otra vez. Supongo que todos hemos escuchado (y nos sabemos de memoria) el versículo evangélico que dice "*Ama a tu prójimo como a ti mismo*" (Mt. 22:38) ¿provoca esto algún cambio para la realidad de millones de jóvenes? Hay también otro: "*...vayan y bauticen a todas las naciones en el nombre del Padre, del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo*" (Mt. 18:20). Sabiendo esto, ¿hemos hecho algo para ir en contra de la cultura hegemónica y ayudar a los jóvenes a soportar lo que ella nos obliga a hacer? Y bueno, ¿ahora qué? ¿vamos a aplaudir y cantar las lindas enseñanzas de Jesús o vamos a dejar de calentar nuestros sillones de cuero y ponernos a trabajar? En "el juicio de las naciones" (Mt. 25:31-46) está muy claro qué es lo que tenemos que hacer: seguir la opción por los más pequeños.

How do we understand Jesus' message today? Current societies do not always reflect the gospel. Our neighbor is in competition with us so we do not care about him/her. Our superfluous cultures for the most part do not provide opportunities for us to perceive Jesus in our sisters and brothers, so we are unable to share his message.



IS THE CHURCH AT FAULT? VIOLENCE AND SEGREGATION ISSUES OF CHURCHES' INADEQUATE RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Vaughn Roste, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Historically, to assert that people of sexual orientations other than heterosexual have been oppressed is not a controversial statement. You need not look far for examples. From the murder of England's King Edward II in the Middle Ages to the imprisonment of British playwright Oscar Wilde in the nineteenth century, gay people in any country have always been viewed as deviant and dangerous. The Nazis¹ denoted them with an upside-down pink triangle and sent them to the concentration camps with other, in their terminology, "undesirables."

Vaughn Roste, second from left, and others sharing fellowship during the CLAI Assembly, Barranquilla, Colombia.

Photo
by T. Valeriano
YICAS/DMD/LWF



What is perhaps even more frightening is that the church, far from being an opponent of human rights abuses, has often tacitly supported them, even perpetuating them itself. The biggest example, undoubtedly, is the groundless accusations of sodomy during the Inquisition when confessions were extorted through torture. Now, I feel that we Lutherans would like to take no responsibility whatsoever for the Inquisition, saying it was an act of the Roman Catholic Church. But it was Lutheran churches that burned women accused of witchcraft at the stake in northern Germany in the sixteenth century. "Well that was centuries ago. Today, things are much better," you might say. Look again. Even present-day churches—and yes, also some of our Lutheran churches—are also responsible for perpetuating violence against people of differing sexual orientations. The violence may no longer be physical but mental, emotional and spiritual, which can result in even deeper wounds.

I believe that the Lutheran church worldwide lacks a true definitive stance on the subject of homosexuality, and that this is probably an accurate reflection of representation on the national, synodical, and even congregational levels as well. That is to say, that within "Lutherandom" in general there is a marked variety of opinions on what the Lutheran response to same-sex rights and behavior should be. Many arguments have been made about theology of law versus gospel and scriptural authority. It is not my intention to address those issues here. Rather, I would like to point out a different perspective from which readers may not yet have considered this question. I contend that the primary issues surrounding gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) people in our churches today should be about justice rather than morality.

Inasmuch as the church fails to address the injustices suffered by the GLBT community, it falls short of its own vision of being an instrument of God's love on earth. Unfortunately, sometimes it is the Christian churches that lead the way in opposing equal human rights for GLBT

¹German fascist political party abolished in 1945.



people. Fred Phelps, a pastor in an American Baptist congregation, is known for his virulent protests against any progress that is being made in the struggle for gay and lesbian human rights and maintains the Web site *godhatesfags.com*. He demonstrated at the funeral of Matthew Shephard, for example, a Wyoming teenager who was murdered for being gay, by carrying placards that said, "Matthew is in hell." Sadly, this is how Christianity is often portrayed to gay and lesbian people: as a fearful, power-hungry, status-quo happy, hate-mongering organization, a far cry from any welcoming place representing God's unconditional love. Who would want to be a part of any organization like that? Something the church doesn't realize is that often it is even harder to come out as a Christian in GLBT circles than it is to come out as gay in Christian circles. Think for a minute about why that might be. With notorious public examples such as Phelps, it is not hard to understand why. Mind you, there are signs of hope: Phelps is also protesting against Lutheran churches in America for being too "gay friendly"—upset, for example, at the recent ordination of openly lesbian Anita Hill in Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States of America whose ordination ceremony last May was attended by over 1,100 people, including five bishops. But these progressive steps are still exceptions to the rule.

The point of this article is that some Lutheran churches or congregations continue to perpetuate mental, emotional, and spiritual violence and unjust segregation against their GLBT members. Violence against people by some churches happens when they hold out the promise of a "cure" for same-sex desire. Sexual behavior is a complicated matter and sexual orientation even more so. While you can control the former, it could be conceded that it might be impossible to determine the latter. I believe it was Augustine who pointed out that "even the saints cannot be held responsible for their dreams." Space hardly permits a detailed examination of this question, but let me make two points:

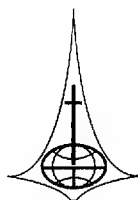
- Even if it is proven that sexual orientation can be changed (N.B.: not behavior), this does not prove that it should be. Can we therefore change straight people into being gay? That would seem to be what some people in the church are saying if they uphold that one can, with enough prayer and desire, alter one's affective predisposition.

There are some psychologists and counselors specializing in the attempted eradication of same-sex desire who are supported by the church, which is an act of violence on behalf of the church. Even the best of these counselors can only claim a success rate of around thirty percent—that's hardly successful. Furthermore, one can counter that because these "success stories" still admit to having same-sex "temptations." Only the behavior, not the orientation, has been changed. The church needs to be extremely careful to avoid inducing any false hope.

To say "God has the power to change anything" is to oversimplify. God does not change skin color no matter how much prayer is offered when a child suffers from constant racism by his/her classmates at school. Similarly, to manipulate GLBT people through guilt into behavior modification that may well be impossible is an act of violence on the church's part that needs to be brought to an end immediately. The notion that GLBT people need to change to become acceptable to God flies in the face of Lutheran theology, which claims that there is no work that might make one righteous.

The idea of a "cure" is based on the notion of homosexuality being a disease (it's hardly contagious or caused by a virus). This idea was dispelled almost thirty years ago but seems to linger on in churches where there is reluctance to embrace scientific learning that may jeopardize their status quo. Society used to require left-handed children to learn how to write with their right hand, that is, until we learned that perhaps it was not the individuals but society at large that needed to learn how to change. In this case, it is the church that continues to act in violent ways toward GLBT people when it holds out the goal of a change that may well seem to be, quite frankly, unattainable.

Acts of violence continue in other ways as well. When the goal of change of orientation cannot be reached, the church often requires GLBT people to remain celibate, thinking that to be a reasonable compromise and obviously attainable. What the church does not realize is that this requirement is unjust in that it segregates a group of people setting up a higher moral standard for them. How can the church expect GLBT people to choose between the spiritual and sexual when no one else has to? The church is hardly being



just when it requires different standards of behavior from its members. Some may get married, some may not. Some may be allowed sexual indiscretions, while others lose their jobs and suffer induced shame from community and family if secrets are uncovered.

"Who will gather around the table of the Lord if the church is empty?"

Photo by
T. Valeriano
Cartagena,
Colombia
YICAS/DMD/LWF



In my opinion, what the church needs to do is come to a greater awareness of the ways in which its current policies are not representative of God's unconditional love. Where its policies are segregationist or perpetuate acts of emotional, mental, and/or spiritual violence, it needs to change. I uphold that the debate raging in some churches about what is an appropriate response needs to be reassessed. The question of whether or not homosexuality is a sin is actually moot—all people are sinners, regardless of orientation. The church's task is to spread the good news of God's unconditional love for all humanity—not just for some, or even most, but for all.

The church sins if it does not adequately address those areas in which GLBT people are being unjustly discriminated against, two of which I

have outlined above. In short, the church needs to start seeing the issue of homosexuality as less of a divisive issue and more as that of an opportunity for community healing—a chance maybe, in some small way, to make amends for the past, and to prove that we as a church are still capable of change and growth as the Holy Spirit leads us. Can we learn from past mistakes and deal with this issue better than we have with ones in days gone by? This is an opportunity for the church to be true to its belief in the gospel and its mission of sharing the good news with all humanity. Jesus loves you. The spreading of that message cannot be a violent or segregationist act.

Vaughn Roste, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, is a student at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. He has a degree in theology from the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute.



A cross from one of the museums in Berlin, Germany, commemorating the destruction of the wall that divided its people. Photo by T. Valeriano YICAS/DMD/LWF



Bennet Prasannakumar
The Arcot Lutheran Church, India

It was very nice to go back to India, my home, after some years abroad. It seemed that suddenly the whole country had changed! Or was it I who had not changed? What made me think this way was the sudden shift in the people's thinking, particularly the youngsters. They sounded very mature and are surely much smarter than the previous generation. That means the future is going to be peaceful and bright. There will be no more violence in a country where Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa lived. Are their dreams too far away to come true? Or are there things that might change again to a violent and intolerant generation? Is technology one of these? The answer is a sad "yes."

While in India, I read an article that said:

There is an increasing number of incidents in India showing religious intolerance, particularly against the Christians. Church leaders in Orissa, in the east of India, stressed in interviews with ENI (*Ecumenical News International*) that the new Christian youth organization, "Rashtriya Surakshya Vahini" (RSV - National Safety Vehicle), will not be a vigilante group and will not resort to violence. The aim of the RSV was "to counter the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] and others through non-violence."

Quite impressive. I wanted to know how my brothers and cousins feel about these issues, as they live there. I found that nearly all of them think that nothing speaks better than violence. I asked my youngest cousin, "Do you think violence is the solution? Won't Gandhi *thatha* (grandpa) be upset at the way we think and act?" His reply was, "Well, he also had a stick."

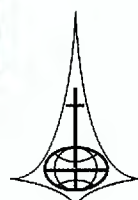
Science and technology on the one hand have made life extremely comfortable. We get a lot of good things from them. But on the other hand alas, they bring a lot of destructive things. Pollution in the air, land and water is becoming a great threat to many species and has already destroyed a considerable number. Although Albert Einstein's magical equation $E=mc^2$ was formulated for constructive purposes, it also brought nuclear weapons and destruction. Are science and technology being kept under proper control? Are we ruling them? Or, are they ruling us? What are we youth doing? Are we fully aware of how our lives are slowly being taken over by them? Are we ourselves becoming slaves to them?

A friend of mine, who works in a very reputable organization in a key position, recently bought a computer. It is one of the latest models with the best configuration. I helped him to set it up. I asked him why do you need such a powerful machine? He said, "For games." "What kind of games?" I asked. He showed me some of them. They were extremely violent ones. He said:



"The Prophet," a brand new video card for computer games

Photo by
L. Veira Sand
YICAS
DMD/LWF



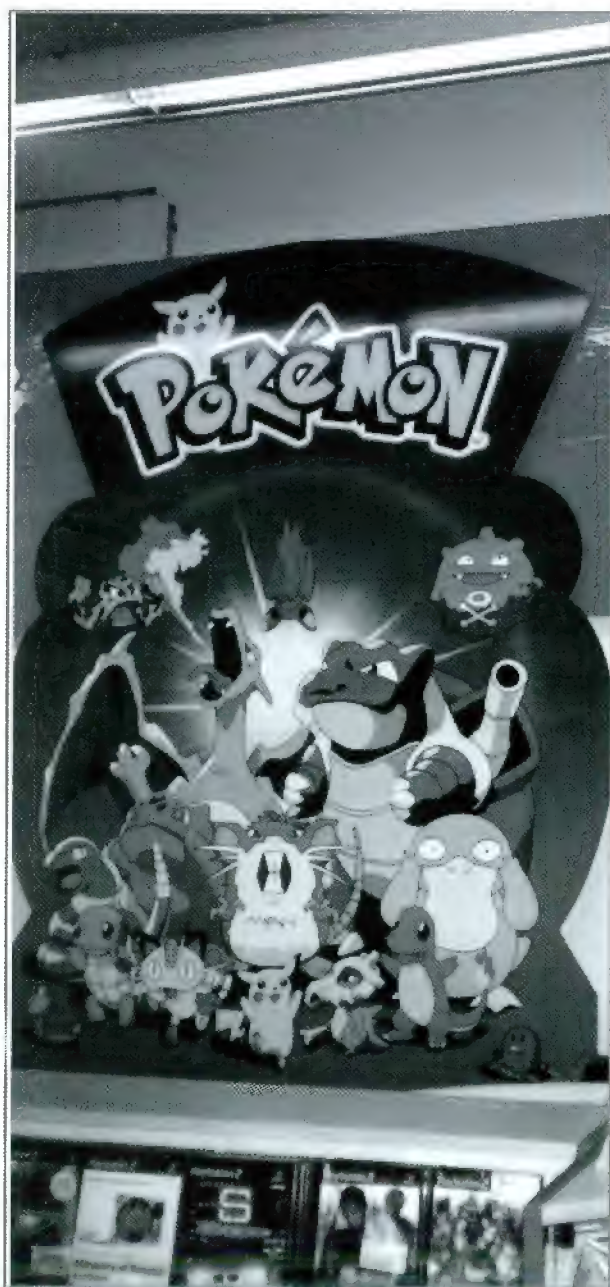
"Everyday I come back home with a lot of frustrations and anger. When I play these games, it makes me feel as though I am shooting and killing those who gave me headaches today. It is an outlet." He said that with a laugh. Whether he meant it or not is another story. But it is quite a sad and frightening fact. If well-educated people fall prey to these games and such reasoning, imagine what younger ones could do.

pays really well. But how many young minds would it turn to violence? A considerable number.

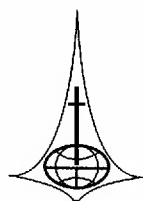
A recent study showed that more than 80 percent of viruses are written by young programmers under twenty-eight years of age. Reomel Ramones, a twenty-seven-year-old and his twenty-three-year-old girlfriend are the authors of the "I love you" bug that brought the whole world to a standstill. The twenty-year-old mystery Dutchman, known only as "OnTheFly" authored the Anna Kournikova virus. The Anna virus spread around the globe twice as fast as the "love" bug and caused thousands of mail servers to crash under the strain. Although it did not reach full effect, it was still one of the most destructive viruses of the year knocking out e-mail systems worldwide. The author of the 1999 damaging CIH/Chernobyl virus was also in his twenties. Even so, both were offered excellent jobs in major information technology firms. Critics say, "Instead of society applauding virus writers, maybe it is time for us to teach youngsters that the damage caused by virus distribution is not only antisocial but a criminal offense in many countries." Who could be better than us to take on that role? Let us, as youth, help those who are younger to recognize the difference, and do more constructive things with their intelligence.

"I'm a big fan of her. She deserves some attention, doesn't she?" These were the words of the Anna virus writer. More and more youngsters are following the stars. A lot of them are ready to do anything for them but they should be made aware of the difference between liking someone and becoming obsessed with them. We have a great responsibility that should be taken seriously. There are many programmers, sales people, designers and, most of all, consumers among us. Let us be very cautious and careful that we do not become the cause of any mind, particularly young ones, turning to violence. Let's do our best to help so that the right decisions will be made to give us all a peaceful and unpolluted future.

Bennet Prasannakumar, a computer technician from India, is an LWF headquarters staff member in Geneva, Switzerland. In 1998, he was a youth intern at the LWF Department for Mission and Development's Youth in Church and Society desk.



Very many of these violent games and movies are created every month. More and more young minds are being taken over and more and more violent things are communicated. I am a programmer myself. Designing one of these games



Julia Helmke

Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern

Abgesehen davon, dass eine genaue Definition von „Gewalt“ und „Medien“ und das Nachdenken und Forschen über dieses Thema bereits ganze Bibliotheken füllt, bleiben viele Fragen weiterhin offen. Ich denke, auch wenn ich aus deutscher Perspektive schreibe, dass in einer globalisierten Welt, in der häufig dieselben Filme weltweit gezeigt werden, dieses Thema auch andere Kontinente und Kulturen in ähnlicher Weise betrifft.

In diesem Jahr regnete es von Karfreitag bis Ostermontag ununterbrochen. Meine Nachbarn haben alle Kinder, in unterschiedlichem Alter. Was sollen die mit sich anfangen, wenn es draussen kalt und ungemütlich, kurz langweilig ist: Fernsehen, Videos schauen, vor dem Computer sitzen. Tagsüber sitzen Kinder und Jugendliche zwischen 1-3 Stunden vor dem Bildschirm, an diesem langen Wochenende waren es vielleicht 10 Stunden, vielleicht sogar 20.

Wie oft haben sie in dieser Zeit beobachtet, wie ein Mensch getötet wurde, gestorben ist – mit welchem Grad an Brutalität? Unvorstellbar! Wie oft wurden Menschen geschlagen und verletzt: Männer, Weiße, Schwarze? Wie viele Frauen, wie viele Kinder waren Opfer von Brutalität? Wie oft hat der Starke den Schwachen besiegt – denn das ist eben das Gesetz? Wie oft wurden Frauen vergewaltigt, Mädchen und Jungen missbraucht, physisch wie psychisch?¹

Fragen, die mir durch den Kopf gingen an diesem langen Wochenende, an dem ich die Fernseher der Nachbarn von morgens bis nachts durch die dünnen Zimmerwände hörte. Zum Schluss flüchtete ich ins Kino. Hier gibt es immerhin Altersgrenzen für Gewaltszenen, eine freiwillige Selbstzensur. Die Prüfkriterien sind nicht immer klar, in den USA z.B. geben sich verschiedene Elternvereinigungen über das Internet Tipps, ob sie den Film als geeignet oder jugendgefährdend einschätzen. Sie zählen dann

akribisch, wie oft eine Waffe im Bild zu sehen war, doch Zählen bringt nicht viel bei diesem komplexen Thema.

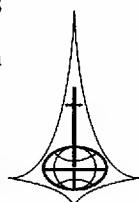
Die Meinungen, ob das Ansehen von Gewalt gewalttätig macht, ob das Zusehen bei Gewaltakten zum Nachahmen und Ausführen von Gewaltakten führt, ist seit Beginn der bewegten Bilder und trotz zahlreicher Forschungsprojekte sowie unübersichtlich umfangreicher Literatur zu diesem Thema unter Experten umstritten. Manche Thesen gehen davon aus, dass das Durchleben von Gewaltakten in der Phantasie oder das Beobachten, bzw. Sehen von Gewalt und Aggression die Bereitschaft zu aggressivem Verhalten mindert. Andere Experten vermuten, dass durch den ständigen Konsum von Fernsehgewalt die Sensibilität gegenüber Gewalt abnimmt und schliesslich als normales Alltagsverhalten betrachtet wird, bzw. dass Gewalt in den Medien zu Nachahmungstaten führen kann.

Jugendliche oft Tag und Nacht Videos, weil die Eltern nicht da sind, um mit ihnen zu spielen oder sich zu unterhalten. Viele sind daran gewöhnt sich vor die „Glötze“ zu setzen, wenn es Schwierigkeiten gibt und man nicht mehr weiter weiss. Andere setzen sich vor den Computer und spielen, um zu vergessen oder sich abzureagieren. Für ältere Jugendliche ist der Zeitvertreib mit Computerspielen auch eine Möglichkeit, auf die Perspektivlosigkeit in der Gesellschaft zu reagieren, darauf, keine Aussicht auf einen Job zu haben. „Wenigsten im Computerspiel bin ich der Held und nicht der Verlierer,“ so der Kommentar eines Jugendlichen.

Hinzu kommt, dass Gewalt ein Faktum im Alltag von Menschen, in unserer Gesellschaft ist. Das Verbot von Gewalt in den Medien hätte nicht zwangsläufig das Verschwinden von Gewalt, Verletzung, ja selbst Tötung von Mitmenschen zu Folge.

Während einer Unterrichtsstunde nutzte ich einmal die Aussage einer Schülerin für den Gesprächseinstieg. Die Schülerin hatte nach dem gemeinsamen Besuch eines Horrorfilmes

¹ Der deutsche Medienforscher Jo Groebel hat berechnet, dass in 48 Prozent aller Fernsehsendungen Aggression auftaucht. 70 Morde sind täglich auf dem Bildschirm zu sehen, 2.745 Gewaltszenen flimmern in einer Woche über den Bildschirm. Mit 14.000 Fernseh-morden ist ein Zwölfjähriger im Durchschnitt in seinem jungen Leben bereits konfrontiert worden.



berichtet: „Eine der schönsten Möglichkeiten des Kinos und eine der erschreckendsten ist es, mit den Schreckensbildern den Teufel an die Wand zu malen. Der Wunsch nach Gewalt zeugt von dem Bedürfnis, aufgerüttelt zu werden...

Wir sehnen uns danach anzuschauen, wie wir in der grössten Gefahr noch einmal mit dem Leben davonkommen. Wir sehnen uns danach, schwierige Fragen auch einmal mit Nein oder Ja, Leben oder Tod zu beantworten. Gewalt konfrontiert uns auch mit uns selbst... Ich kann dem, was mir auch an mir nicht gefällt, ins Auge schauen, und dann selbst entscheiden, darüber zu lachen. Ich bin im Kino auch nicht allein, sondern in Gemeinschaft. Ich finde es o.k., wenn Gewalt auch gezeigt wird. Natürlich gibt es Grenzen - und wenn der Teufel für mich das ist, was dem Leben entgegensteht dann gibt es ja auch noch Gott, als der, der das Leben liebt.“ Nach diesem Einstieg hatten wir eine Diskussion, die so spannend war wie selten zuvor.

Eine der wichtigsten Möglichkeiten, mit Gewalt in den Medien umzugehen, ist für mich: zu reden. Eltern mit Kindern, Jugendliche mit Eltern und LehrerInnen, Erwachsene miteinander, Kirchen und TheologInnen mit den Fernsehmachern und Sendern sowie JournalistInnen miteinander in den Medien. Erst einmal ohne gleich schwarz-weiss zu malen, mit vorgefertigten Meinungen zu kommen, sondern einfach zuzuhören. Ein Schritt in die richtige Richtung wäre, die Seherfahrungen und die Gefühle anderer zu reflektieren und dann die einzelnen Filme noch einmal genau anzusehen. Pauschale allgemeine Statements nützen wenig, sie stumpfen ebenso ab wie unreflektiertes Sehen und Produzieren. Was denkt Ihr?

Julia Helmke, Jugendkontaktperson der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern, Pfarrerin im Ökumenereferat München, Studium in Kulturjournalismus/Filmkritik.



Viele Fernseher, eine grosse Vielfalt von Programmen und Sendungen
Foto L. Veira Sand YICAS/DMD/LWB

VIOLENCE IN THE MEDIA

A PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION FOR DISCUSSION

Julia Helmke, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (Summary from German)

Beyond the fact that definitions of "violence" and "media" could fill a whole library, the words raise many questions. I write from a German perspective but they belong to our globalized world and concern other continents and cultures as well.

This Easter we had a lot of rain. My neighbors' children of different ages didn't find much else to do, so they sat in front of the TV watching videotapes and playing computer games. Youth spend between one and three hours everyday in front of screens. On this weekend, such a time was increased to ten or twenty hours!

How often do they see the brutality of someone being killed? How often are people murdered and beaten whether white or black? How many women and children are beaten? How often are the strong or weak defeated? How often are women raped, and youth abused both physically and psychologically?¹ Even if there is some form of censorship of violent scenes in the interest of minors, there is still a lot out there that affects youth. Some hypotheses on this affirm that violent scenes produce violent men and women, while others deny it.

Violence itself is a complex issue, (beyond the influence exerted by TV), and regularly develops in a vicious cycle. In many instances, for example, children and youth watch videotapes when their parents have little time to talk or play with them. It is habitual for many people to retreat to the computer or TV screen when faced with other problems. This can also be the case when young adults lack perspective or are suffering

unemployment. "At least, when you're playing computer games you're among the winners," somebody says. On the other hand, it is clear that violence is an everyday factor of our society and of our human existence. It would be incorrect to avoid seeing or accepting that, or just to prohibit films involving violence.

Once when working as a teacher, I was struck by a statement from a schoolgirl after watching rather a cruel film with her in class. She said: "I love those kinds of movies. They give me a thrill and a feeling of being alive. They show me more clearly where my limits are. I can decide what to watch and what not to watch, to experience the presence of God and the Devil in daily life." Her comment was followed up by the best class discussion we had ever had, debating the "for" and "against."

So the most important thing about violence in the media is to talk about it: parents with children, and youth with parents, teachers, adults, churches and theologians. In this way, we can put our ideas, impressions and perspectives of movies, films and media to use, for what they are: A gift of images, important in the telling of stories, that make us laugh, cry, think, struggle, and feel angry and sad. Use them to share your feelings not just in front of the screen but also with other human beings. If we don't and get too used to violence without reflection and discussion on it, we'll lose our sensitivity.

What's your opinion?

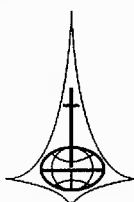
Julia Helmke is the LWF Youth Liaison in Germany. She has studied both theology and cinematographic direction.

English translation and summary by Rodolfo Olivera Obermöller, Chile-Argentina.



Current movies being shown at cinemas worldwide.
Photo by L. Veira Sand YICAS/DMD/LWF

¹ The German media researcher, Jo Groebel, has calculated that 48 percent of all TV broadcasts include images of aggression. In one week, 70 killings and 2,745 scenes of violence can be seen on 14,000 TV screens. All are available to any young 12-year-old child.



Temesgen Berhane, Evangelical Church of Eritrea

May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. This is a special opportunity for me to get acquainted with you and other Christian brothers and sisters.

When God created the earth and all other creatures, He created them perfectly. At that time there was no evil or sin. When God finished his work of creation, he observed what he had created. "...indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). But after a while the deceiver rebelled against God, and took man from God's hand and made him his slave.

Since then, the earth has been full of evil including violence. Today, we live in a violent world. People of different ages suffer from violence. Many people, especially those who were and are in power, and those who are dominant, carry out violent deeds. Even parents are not free from violence; some are even perpetrators. Many people have acted and are acting violently. Genesis 6:11 reads, "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence."

I have a friend who suffered from violence inflicted by his parents. They were not familiar with what the Bible says. They were zealots of their old religion. Fortunately, my friend started reading the Bible, and became a believer. He accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and started to live according to God's word. But his parents didn't allow him to do so. They protested against it. They told him several times to stop. But he did not give up. So he continued to suffer from their violence.

Every member of his family stood against him. They tore up his Bible and other spiritual books. They disturbed him while he was praying. His brothers and sisters insulted and disrespected him, and he was forbidden to join them at meal-times. His father and two elderly brothers beat him many times. His life was difficult. One day all the family members, including the younger ones, waited for him warning him to stop or leave home. He became confused and did not know what to do.

In frustration, he decided to commit suicide. But miraculously the Lord spared him. Then, he recalled the violence that Jesus had suffered. He read in Isaiah 53:9, "They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth." This gave him strength. He also read from 1 Timothy 1:13 "...even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief." Then he discerned that God's mercy is for all humankind. So, he began praying for his family despite their violence.

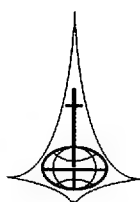
His family continued to be violent even though he invited them to join in his way of life and God's mercy. He believed that one day his family would turn to his way of life, and stop being violent. "Thus says the Lord God: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and do what is just and right" (Ezek 45:9).

The battle continued. They went on pressuring him to stop. Tolerating all tribulation, he insisted with prayer that they would someday turn to his way of life. God was with him and did not forsake his loyal slave. God listened to his prayer, and finally those prayers were answered. The family was converted and now he worships God peacefully and joyfully together with his family.

Brothers and sisters, do you see how he (my friend) won the battle? He bore tribulation bravely and patiently. There are lots of ups and downs on the walk of life. We may be faced with violence and other tribulation but we must confront them patiently. We must await God's judgment. God will give his judgment: "Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of the violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they have shed innocent blood" (Joel 3:19).

May God give all of us patience. God bless you.

Temesgen Berhane, a young man, is an active member of his church.



A survivor of incest wrote this poem, from the supposed point of view of her unborn child, seven years after being forced by her parents to abort the child. For privacy reasons she wishes to remain anonymous. It is not meant to be judgmental, but rather wrestles with the difficult issues surrounding the violence against herself—a child—and her unborn child. It is hoped that this will provoke introspection and discussion on the matter, in the light of faith, compassion and God's unconditional love.

A ghastly monster invades my soul
With a giant claw-like grip
It plunges forth this hostile thing
I must I must escape it!

A horrendous surge pierces me
Torrential waves suck me forth
And in the distance I hear a voice:
"Abort!" it says, "Abort!"

I fight, I struggle, I scream to get free
But overwhelming is its force
So much so that I find my strength
Ended in an abrupt divorce.

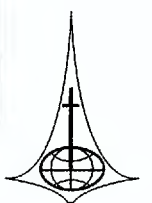
What manner of beast is this?
Whose authoritative voice gave that order?
Alas! I'm consumed by the harsh reality...
The voice is that of my own mother!

Why? What did I do?
Is there anyone to hear my cry?
What crime did I unknowingly commit
So awful that I must die?

Everything is still now--
The answers I've not yet heard
The only consolation I'll ever receive
Is that of my Creator's Word.

Anonymous, August 1993 © YICAS

Painting
in background
by
S.Niederberger,
see p. 45.



De Francisco KAPALU NGONGO

Salut Frères! Voici ci-dessous je vais énumérer quelques actes de violences que connaît mon peuple et donner ensuite quelques voies et moyens pouvant aider mon peuple à quitter cette violence.

Avant toute chose il m'est opportun de signaler qu'avant tout comme qu'après son indépendance, le peuple angolais n'a jamais connu une période de paix. Oui, il faut signaler qu'il y a eu parfois de périodes très éphémères de paix mais qui se terminaient toujours par des affrontements très sanglants.

Voici maintenant quarante ans que le peuple angolais vit dans cette guerre très horrible. Une guerre cruelle, qui déchire son tissu social, son patrimoine national et qui multiplie les nombres de réfugiés, veuves, mutilés, orphelins et enfants de la rue. A cause de la calamité de la guerre beaucoup d'Angolais sont découragés :

- Ils disent Dieu n'existe pas sinon il devrait nous aider à trouver la paix.
- Ils considèrent tout le monde comme des ennemis tout en mettant leur confiance dans les armes comme le seul moyen de protection à leur disposition.

Mais où sont les jeunes angolais, eux? Les jeunes ils sont en même temps acteurs principaux des criminalités et victimes de celles-ci. Les enfants et les jeunes hommes à partir de 8 ans, sont forcément enrôlés dans l'armée. De là ils vont apprendre à tuer leurs compatriotes considérés comme des ennemis et voir même je dirais, ils vont apprendre à détruire leur propre pays. La plupart de jeunes n'ont pas eu la chance de faire l'école primaire néanmoins ils sont spécialistes en armes, ils savent plutôt tuer que construire.

Sur ce point je me souviens un jour en 1998 quand j'étais à Luanda, deux enfants de 9 ans se disputaient. Tout d'un coup l'un des deux a pris directement l'arme et tira sur l'autre. Puis, avant que la police n'intervienne, le frère de la victime a pris aussi l'arme, il a couru pour tuer quatre personnes de la famille qui a tué son frère.

Les jeunes filles à Luanda, à cause de la misère, se livrent dans la prostitution. Ce sont des filles de 18 ans qui se prostituent avec des hommes de plus de 50 ans. Elles aussi n'ont pas la chance d'étudier. Il y a beaucoup d'exemples de violences que je ne peux pas tout énumérer ici. La seule chose que je veux souligner c'est de savoir que la guerre s'est amenée avec toute sorte de violence.

Ensuite elle a semé le désespoir dans l'esprit de ce peuple. Et ce sont les jeunes qui sont utilisés.

Que faire pour arrêter toutes ces violences en Angola? Bien que la majorité des Angolais soient découragés et ne croient pas à la paix, il y a d'autres personnes qui croient à la paix, laquelle paix qui éliminerait toutes formes de violences. Les églises prêchent l'évangile de la paix mais les gens bouchent leurs oreilles.

Quant à moi bien qu'ayant vécu en exil pendant plus de 20 ans, j'ai toujours espéré rentrer chez moi en Angola dans la tranquillité et la paix. Ensuite servir mon peuple tant que je le pourrai. Il convient de noter que la vie en exil c'est aussi un calvaire. Les réfugiés ont été souvent considérés comme un sous-peuple, personnes sans dignité et souvent négligées. Dans ma vie d'exilé, j'ai expérimenté beaucoup de souvenirs qui ont déchiré complètement mon cœur mais il me serait ingrat de témoigner contre le nom du Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus. Malgré les situations difficiles j'ai toujours vu sa main forte se manifester à moi.

On peut se demander :

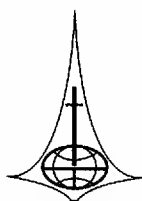
- Comment j'ai pu terminer toutes mes études secondaires et universitaires au Congo (RDC) sans bourses?
- Est-ce que j'étais différent des autres réfugiés angolais ?
- Comment est-ce que j'ai pu arriver et vivre ici à Genève ?

Derrière ces questions il y a un long témoignage. Je ne saurais pas tout décrire, mais je voudrais seulement insister sur le fait que Dieu est grand, ceux qui se penchent vers lui ne succombent jamais pour toujours. La main de notre Seigneur est plus forte pour nous sauver dans n'importe quelle situation.

Pour finir, je vous prie de prier pour le peuple angolais, prier pour eux afin qu'ils tournent leurs regards à la croix de Golgotha et croient que le prince de paix est mort aussi pour eux. Peuple de Dieu, priez pour l'église angolaise afin qu'elle puisse prêcher le message divin de l'amour à tous les Angolais. Enfin, je vous prie de prier pour toutes les autorités angolaises pour qu'elles connaissent le nom de notre seigneur et sauveur Jésus.

Christ, qu'elles obéissent et gouvernent le peuple selon la volonté divine.

Francisco était l'un des stewards à la Réunion du Conseil de la FLM à Genève en 2001.



Anna Amanuel, Evangelical Church of Eritrea

Eritrea was established as an Italian colony on 1 January 1890. An independent state in Africa since May 1991, it held a referendum in 1993 and was formally admitted to membership of the United Nations in May of the same year. The country is bordered in the east by the Red Sea, in the west by Ethiopia, in the southeast by Djibouti, and in the north and northwest by Sudan. After being under Italian and British rule, Eritrea was colonized by Ethiopia in 1962 following the federation's dissolution. Eritrea undertook one of the longest wars of liberation in African history. Currently, it covers an area of 121,144 square kilometers, and has nine ethnic groups. The total population is 3,842,436 (1998).

ERITREA'S ECONOMY

The war with Ethiopia that began in the 1960s and the famine that hit the entire region in the 1970s and 1980s caused a great deal of destruction, disruption and population movement. Eritrea's economy suffered massive damage and dislocation as a result of the drought, famine and war. The country still faces daunting economic problems. Recovering from war, resettling internally and externally displaced people, attaining food sufficiency, re-building the infrastructure, all demand careful planning and allocation of scarce resources.

which had not been precisely demarcated when Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993. This bitter war once again resulted in economic disruption and the deportation of more than 70,000 Eritreans living in Ethiopia at the time. More than a million people also were internally displaced in May 2000. Most of the expellees had Ethiopian nationality and an affinity with the country, having never before been to Eritrea.

Eritrean youth nationwide were called to defend their motherland. This human power has been on the front line for the past three years. Eritrea's economy is again being badly disrupted.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN OVERCOMING SOCIAL ECONOMIC VIOLENCE?

More than 85 percent of Eritrean youth performs national service duty. They have an upper role in rehabilitation of the country in general. This includes reconstructing the economy and helping orphaned households at the village level. Their greatest contribution to rehabilitation has been in balancing living standard inflation rates. To mention some:

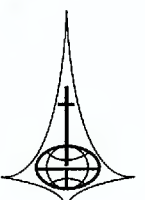
- Many of the country's youth are serving for free. Invested in various sectors of society, this labor has saved the exchequer a lot of useful money.



Eritrean internally displaced people due to the war, in Teseney, Eritrea. Photo by Oxfam-GB team.

In mid 1998, clashes again broke out along the countries' borders, each country accusing the other of seizing territory. Tens of thousands of Eritrean and Ethiopian troops were sent to the border,

- Youth are working at reconstruction of the country's infrastructure, e.g. roads, buildings and railway renovation, the backbone of the economy.



- Eritrea has one cultivation season. Missing or losing out on this season because of lack of rain, or war, has exposed the country to severe drought and food-aid dependency. The youth introduced integrated farming in 1994 which has resulted in tangible economic recovery, raising per capita income by 7 percent before the war launched in 1998. This helped the country to produce grain on a large scale and store it in government warehouses so people could buy at fair prices.

- Youth produce vegetables and fruits in various fertile areas that hopefully will satisfy demand. Junior and high-school students have similar programs every summer, in cultivation and forestry.

- Youth participate in mobilizing campaigns to overcome illiteracy in the rural areas, of great importance to the economy.

- Youth living outside the country contribute financially and in kind. They mobilize people living abroad toward reconstruction of the country, useful in development. Their funds are usually allocated to hospital equipment, education materials, and for orphanages, children, sport and so on.

THE ROLE OF ERITREAN CHURCHES

There are three Christian churches recognized by the Government of Eritrea (GoE): the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches. There are also several small churches that can be grouped under the Protestant denominations. The Bible Society association in Eritrea unites all the Christian churches providing strong support in the control of economic violations. To name a few, it:

- leads prayers to remove the curse that brings disaster on social life and the economy.

- organizes conferences for the Christian community to mobilize people in supporting the needy by encouraging members to contribute in cash and/or in kind. The churches deliver these contributions to the beneficiaries using their own transport. Collectively, this is very helpful to the GoE.

- played a significant role in helping people to stay calm during critical times, and strongly advising/recommending that people should share everything from food to shelter with displaced people.

- The leaders of these churches together with the Muslim sheiks have held meetings with their Ethiopian counterparts on several occasions and tried to broker peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. This has had a significant impact on the country's economy.

WHAT IS THE PARTICULAR ROLE OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF ERITREA?

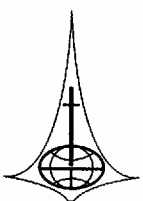
The Evangelical Church of Eritrea is much involved in eradicating illiteracy by constructing schools, recruiting and training teachers. It is engaged in capacity-building for demobilized troops, single women, and others. It struggles with the issue of unemployment especially for women, and the seeking of solutions. In this respect, the church tries to encourage the self-sufficiency of unemployed people by organizing training in cooking, sewing, weaving, carpentry, metal work, and so on. Attendees are few because the church has limited capacity. A number of rehabilitated prostitutes are participating in the training. The church also works on gender equity. As a result, women have reserved seats in the administration and enjoy equal opportunity in voting.

This church is the only one engaged in helping disabled people who may be a burden to their families. It has built two boarding schools in Eritrea for the deaf and admits several numbers of disabled persons per year. It is also active in providing HIV/AIDS forums and providing counseling for victims and their families.

CONCLUSION

As you may see, Eritrea is one among the developing countries that has had its economy badly disrupted. The Eritrean people in general, and Eritrean youth in particular, have played a significant role in overcoming violation of the country. Eritrean churches have the vital duty and responsibility to guide the people's spirit and morale positively. The church needs to persist in encouraging the people to remain united and mindful of one another.

Anna Amanuel is a member of the Youth Board of her church.



Modris James Pavasars, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia



A modern Colombian city where great disparity exists between the rich and poor.

Photo by
L. Veira Sand
YICAS/DMD/LWF

You may have heard much about Colombia, especially if you have kept up to date with news related to human rights, drug trafficking and the volatile peace process in the country.

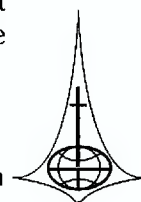
My aim is to present some thoughts on violence in Colombia and how it relates to the youth and society. There are some structural difficulties in defining violence as such, and even more in trying to explain a specific contextual reality. According to current definitions, countries of the "South" would find it easier to interpret violence in Colombia since it relates somewhat to their own situation. But globalization has also rendered countries in the "North" more sensitive and understanding to what goes on in the world as a whole.

Let me begin by describing the current situation of Colombian society that has developed from a cross-cultural heritage and certain impositions from the Spanish conquest. This regime was controlled by the Roman Catholic Church that seemed to find fit evangelization using methods that nowadays would be highly questionable, such as forcing belief under threat of death. Not only were Roman Catholic priests greatly respected but

they also served as a means to educate the public. Even so, national literacy was developing slowly at that time since only the very wealthy were privileged enough to afford a private tutor. The Colombian state became independent in the nineteenth century and, paradoxically, more violent.

I will list three reasons that may help explain this phenomenon of increased violence, which is more of an approach to self-understanding not to be taken as a general rule or theory.

- The oppressive economic structure that in many cases enforced hard labor with little or no pay, as well as various taxing methods pressurizing laborers to work certain crops. Although this may well be the case for most economies in transition from industrialization to development, it is important to note that the current Colombian economy is a mixture of different phases: feudalism, new-born industrialization, and an approach to implement what has been referred to as neo-liberalism (in short, the implementation of free-market reforms, democratic regimes and competitive capitalism).



• Some scholars agree that Colombia is being sucked into a "culture of violence," which is evident in everyday life. The media frequently features stories of massacres, gross human rights violations, kidnappings, and so on. Not that this is untrue but my aim is to show how these negative reports influence public opinion and morale, creating an atmosphere of despair and hopelessness. There exists also a certain characteristic aggressiveness on the streets, people always passing by in a hurry and practically driving over you with their vehicles, at the same time swearing loudly. Long queues at financial establishments add more stress. It is easy just to phrase the need for tolerance and respect toward each human being, an understanding of his/her ideological differences and his/her search for good living standards. Western culture takes good living standards, documented by ideas such as the rule of law, justice, freedom and equality as true in a democracy but in developing countries such as Colombia this is just barely attained.

• People are living their lives in a truly post-modern environment that has led them away from God. It is quite a paradigm that post-modernism, viewed in the church structure as ecumenism, is at the grass-roots level confusing people causing them to stray from the Lord. This can be witnessed when ordinary people are approached with statements such as: "All religions will take you to the same god; they all pursue similar objectives and it really does not matter which god you follow as long as you follow someone." It is true that the Christian church as an organization is strongly impelling dialogue among diverse faiths but those who have no faith are driven into confusion by the relativity of the whole contemporary Christian era.

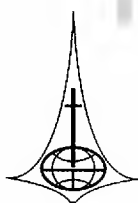
Living in contexts with little reason for hope, youth are direct targets for these new phenomena. High unemployment, no vision for the future, gang activities, theft and delinquency, common to most countries, seem to be severely exaggerated in Colombian society. But worst of all, I believe, is the lack of faith in God and the absence of community experience. Strengthening this faith while experiencing sharing in a church community becomes an alternative to the so-called neo-liberal individualistic tendency, which is a market-based faith.

Youth are experiencing a universal desire for "spiritual fulfillment" not only as a sensational experience but also as an anchor from which to live in the midst of a hurting world. That is why it is so important in a fragmented society, like the present post-modernist one, to work with them to bring hope and life. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." So if we want to overcome the culture of violence, we need to walk together baring our visions for a healed community.

Modris James Pavasars has attended both local and international ecumenical events.



Traces of colonialism in Cartagena, Colombia.
Photo by T. Valeriano YICAS/DMD/FLM



NEO-TRIBUS: UN ACERCAMIENTO A LAS SUBCULTURAS JUVENILES EN AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE

Por Angel Luis Rivera A. Consejo latinoamericano de Iglesias

El término “neo-tribu” lo utilizamos para establecer un comportamiento juvenil colectivo con fuertes rasgos de identificación propia y diferenciación con el resto de la población, en un contexto de individualismo y exclusión en la ciudad, donde se desarrolla principalmente. Se trata de grupos juveniles que hacen proclamación expresa del sentido colectivo y grupal, situados al margen de la rutina social y de lo que podría considerarse como corriente oficial en una determinada cultura. Según los estudiosos, parecen oponerse, abierta y violentamente al paradigma individualista que ha sido, de algún modo, el modelo dominante en todo el período moderno de nuestra civilización. Parafraseando el análisis que los autores Oriol Costa, Perez y Tropea hacen en el libro Tribus Urbanas, los jóvenes que acceden a este tipo de comportamiento presentan las siguientes características:

El principio vital de estas nuevas agrupaciones reposa sobre una paradoja esencial en nuestras ciudades: a mayor crecimiento, aislamiento, racionalización y masificación de la sociedad, mayor es la necesidad que los jóvenes manifiestan en relacionarse con sus congéneres, así como mayor es la necesidad de resistir el individualismo y expresar lo lúdico, lo emocional, lo gregario, dentro de un contexto magnificado por los propios medios masivos de comunicación.

COMPRENDIENDO A LAS SUB-CULTURAS JUVENILES

El universo de las sub-culturas juveniles es amplio y diverso. Algunas de sus expresiones pasan por la pura identificación con determinado género musical y vestimenta (metaleros, rockers, maquineros) mientras otros abrigan un sentido mas ideológico y programático (punks, skinheads) Ahora bien, existen una serie de factores que



Las neo tribus son también conocidas en otras ciudades del mundo. Graffiti en un vagón del RER (tren urbano) París (Francia)

Foto L. Veira Sand YICAS, FLM

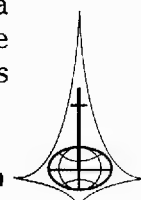
1. Tienden a potenciar instintos de asociación y colectividad del sujeto, insertándose en una unidad de orden superior a su individualidad.

2. Defienden presuntos intereses comunes o de grupo y estrechan vínculos colectivos basados en valores específicos.

3. Son un ámbito propicio para compartir experiencias y rituales, a menudo secretos, que generan y consolidan el sentido de pertenencia al grupo.

son bastante comunes a todos los sub-grupos juveniles, los cuales nos pueden dar una perspectiva clara para entender mejor su comportamiento e, incluso, poder relacionarnos con ellos y ellas de forma efectiva. Se pueden trazar los siguientes rasgos básicos dentro del neotribalismo:

COMUNIDAD EMOCIONAL - Frente a la realidad de las comunidades individualistas y empresariales que caracterizan a la sociedad moderna, la juventud neo-tribal fundamenta su forma de relacionarse en la comunión de emociones



intensas, efímeras, sujetas a la moda, pero siempre dotadas de un aspecto colectivo. Algunas neo-tribus, como los okupas en Barcelona, España, viven sus emociones rescatando viviendas abandonadas. Los b-boys manifiestan su reto mayoritariamente en la elaboración de grafitis urbanos. En el caso de los metaleros y los ghosts o darks su universo de emociones fuertes se centra en los géneros musicales y en las letras de las canciones de sus grupos representativos, sobre todo del ámbito llamado subterráneo.

ENERGÍA SUBTERRÁNEA - Mientras la sociedad de consumo somete a los individuos a la pasividad y a la irradiación de consignas oficiales, las subculturas juveniles oponen un frente fragmentado de resistencia y prácticas alternativas. Ejemplo de esto son los eventos deportivos, conciertos musicales e, incluso, manifestaciones políticas. Es decir, que las neo-tribus se adueñan de estos espacios de acción para promover una respuesta vitalista y sensual - aunque dispersa y atomizada - al poder tradicional y a su forma oficial de estructuración.

SOCIABILIDAD DISPERSA - Al dictado imperialista e individualista de la sociedad moderna, la neo-tribalización juvenil opone una actitud mas empática, en donde las relaciones se mueven en un ámbito mas subjetivo, ubicados en atmósferas ó ambientes de sentimiento. Vale mas el feeling que la racionalidad de medios y fines. El grupo, la red, la neo-tribu busca mas la sintonía y la armonía entre sus componentes que el mero acuerdo ó similitud de pensamiento, ú opiniones abstractas sobre cómo debe andar el mundo. Por ende, el marco rígido de relaciones, las reglas sobre "cómo saber vivir" de la sociedad moderna va dando paso a formas más fluidas y desarticuladas de sociabilidad.

PREDOMINIO DE LA FÍSICIDAD - El fenómeno del alto individualismo, promovido por la sociedad competitiva en la que vivimos, ha favorecido el aislamiento progresivo del individuo y de su núcleo familiar. A esto, las subculturas juveniles responden con una "microexplosión" de eventos con fuerte contenido físico, tales como el predominio del baile, codearse con otros cuerpos, practicar el mosh, beber cerveza en locales repletos de gente, pelearse con otros. Todo esto responde casi compulsivamente a la excesiva pérdida de relaciones humanas. Al decir de los estudiosos, se trata de la

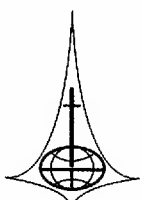
emergencia de la Potencia agregadora frente al Poder que disgrega.

RESPUESTA CRISTIANA Y EVANGÉLICA AL FENÓMENO NEO-TRIBAL

Proponemos un acercamiento bíblico-teológico a la figura de Jesús, haciendo especial énfasis en lo apasionado de su vida. Jesús de Nazaret tiene el potencial de paradigma a la comunidad emocional que teje la juventud en la medida que las experiencias narradas en los Evangelios son un antro de emociones intensas y diversas. Asumir la sabiduría de Jesús en las parábolas, acompañadas de su astucia, gracia e ironía. Se trata de abordar a Jesús desde la perspectiva limpia de sus dichos, frases, burlas, retos y fantasías, tal y como surgen de una lectura popular de la Biblia. También se puede hacer referencia a la vida de Jesús de Nazaret desde una dimensión periférica, alejado de los centros de poder y decisión. Por otro lado en el trabajo con jóvenes siempre ha sido de gran bendición el contar con grupos de reflexión: sesiones en las que el joven puede ser él o ella misma. Estos grupos basan su compartir en la propia interacción física, el abrazo cuando hace falta el consuelo y la solidaridad, el sentido de pertenencia, la proximidad de seres humanos que, como él o ella, pasan por situaciones complejas de enfrentamiento a la realidad social en que se están desarrollando.

En resumen, los autores Oriol, Pérez y Tropea hacen el siguiente comentario para culminar su estudio: "quien se vuelve sordo, tarde o temprano, empieza a subirse de tono y a gritar, porque ya no logra entender las frecuencias bajas, aquellas que hacen vibrar y producen empatías, provocando las consonancias". Como cristianos y cristianas estamos llamados a buscar esas empatías, comprender culturas y encarnarnos con la juventud, a buscar avenidas de diálogo, no desde el balcón de nuestras intransigencias, sino desde el propio terreno de juego de sus propias necesidades de amor, aceptación y rebeldía ante la sociedad individualista en la que se ha tenido que crecer.

Angel Luis Rivera trabaja en las oficinas centrales del Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias (CLAI) en Quito, Ecuador. Es originario de Puerto Rico.



NEO-TRIBES: AN APPROACH TO THE YOUTH SUB-CULTURES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Angel Luis Rivera A., Latin American Council of Churches (Summary from Spanish)

The term "neo-tribe" can be used to describe one kind of collective behavior among the young, where a group forms on the basis of similar outlook and, once it has found its identity, expresses disaffection for the rest of society. Youth groups today mean young people who are collectively opting out of the "establishment," of the "conventional way" of doing things in a specific culture. According to the researchers Oriol, Costa, Pérez and Tropea in their work on "urban tribes," these groups are vehemently opposed to the dominant individualistic paradigm of modern civilization. Those

- Social schisms: Neo-tribes value collective feelings over against individual rationale.
- Physical reactions predominate, e.g., dancing, fighting.

One Christian evangelical response to the neo-tribes could be to offer a biblical and theological approach to the character of Jesus, highlighting his impassioned life. Jesus of Nazareth embraces all youth. The gospel itself is full of emotion. It is a matter of discerning Jesus' wisdom in the parables, which demonstrate intelligence, irony and grace. On the one hand, Jesus also held himself



Venezuelan graffiti commemorating the European colonization of the American continent.

Photo:
YICAS/DMD/LWF

involved share certain characteristics, they

- have a tendency to join peer groups
- advocate certain group values, and
- join in rituals and share experiences that strengthen their sense of belonging.

These new groups are emerging because of an essential paradox in our cities. There is increasing isolation of the individual and, in the guise of rationalization, this is coupled with people being treated as an inchoate mass. The result is an increasing need for close relationships. Young people's resistance to the "I-me-mine" culture finds expression physically, emotionally and in peer groups. In order to understand the world of youth sub-cultures, it is essential to grasp the basic features:

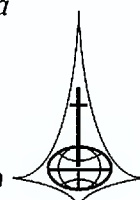
- Emotion-based groups, which experience brief but deep, collective emotions.
- Energy driven underground that provides alternative practices to conforming slogans.

apart from the centers of power. On the other, it is a blessing to have groups for reflection, where young people may be themselves and experience solidarity, a sense of belonging, and give each other a hug whenever they feel sad.

As Christians, we have to find a common meeting place that would allow us to talk to other young people on equal terms. This dialogue has to happen not from some intransigent platform of our choosing but from an understanding of people's thirst for love and acceptance, and of their rejection of an individualistic, selfish society at whose hands they have suffered.

Angel Luis Rivera A. comes from Puerto Rico, Costa Rica.

English translation and summary by Lucas Veira Sand, former LWF staff.



1ST YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE 6-12 APRIL 2001 EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (NATAL-TRANSVAAL)

Georg Meyer, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Natal-Transvaal)

A group of about twenty young adults, aged eighteen to twenty-five years, from many different congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Natal-Transvaal) met for a conference on mission outreach from 6 to 12 April 2001. Gathering amid the majestic surroundings of the Drakensberg mountain range foothills, where the small Church of Elandsdraal runs a conference center, provided for a very strong feeling of fellowship. Rev. Georg Meyer, Rev. Dr Detlev Tönsing and youth pastor, Rev. Markus Eichler, organized the meeting. Its main aim was to reach out to the rural areas of Kwazulu-Natal, as well as to let young adults get a feel for our global calling from Christ to go out into the world and spread the good news.

Acceptance and Understanding," "Calling, Bridging Gaps, Personal Evangelism" as well as a history of mission until modern times. This allowed the young adults to gain knowledge of themselves and their calling, as well as what could be expected from the planned outreaches. At the same time, it provided an opportunity for the group to get to know each other and form a team.

The participants were divided into four groups assigned to regions, and given guides and translators. On 10 and 11 April the separate groups went to their assigned regions and put into practice what was asked of them by their leaders; but more importantly by Christ Himself.

Most homesteads consist of anything from two to ten huts made from sticks and mud mixed with cow dung and straw. There is no electricity, no running water, or sanitation facilities. The lucky few have gas for energy. The homestead is normally surrounded by a self-made fence or stonewall. There are a few chickens and cattle about, as well as maize crops that provide the staple diet. The people are extremely poor, many below the bread line. There is one senior citizen, usually an elderly lady, in most family units with the responsibility of looking after the many children. There are not many males of working age. They are most probably in the big cities earning money to support the family at home. The children grow up in poverty not really getting to know their fathers who normally return twice a year for the Easter and Christmas holidays. They do not have many male role models to relate to. HIV/AIDS affects most households either directly or indirectly.

Most participants were able to talk to the head of the family through a translator and share their faith with the people to try and encourage hope. They held small devotions and prayed for the well being of the family, before they moved on to the next. The whole camp was an eye-opening experience for us as young adults, being exposed to some of the conditions people live under in the rural areas of our own country. We will continue to pray for the people we met.

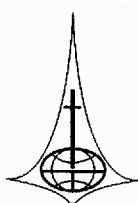
Georg Meyer is the LWF Youth Liaison in South Africa.

Tebogo Mokolobate from South Africa, one of the stewards at the 2001 LWF Council meeting, Geneva, Switzerland.



Photo
by T. Valeriano
YICAS/DMD/LWF

For the first two days, the participants attended both the local German Lutheran church in Elandsdraal as well as the local Zulu Lutheran Church in Nazareth where they interacted with the local community through song and preaching. The warmth and hospitality with which the congregation welcomed such activities was both surprising and inspiring. It gave the young adults a chance to meet the type of people they would soon reach out to, as well as an understanding of the circumstances and surroundings of the homesteads. The next few days were spent on talks and lectures on mission, among them: "The Heart of God" (God has a heart for mission), "Self-History and Testimonial Practice," "Self-



STRENGTHENED YOUTH IDENTITY CENTRAL WEST EUROPE YOUTH'S CHALLENGE

Teresita Valeriano and Lucas Veira Sand, YICAS

On 24-25 March 2001, eleven young Lutherans from Central West Europe (CWE) met in Berlin, Germany to learn from and work with each other. This was their first youth networking meeting. Regina Jaekel (Switzerland), Mary Janssen van Raay (Netherlands), Rindra Rakotozafy (France), Noemí Kuck (Italy), Tobias Treseler, Julia Helmke, Karin Manz, Ronny Pasedag, Wolfgang Lindner, Martin Herrbruck, and Sarah Oltmanns (Germany), representing their respective churches. Lucas Veira Sand and Teresita Valeriano from the

region. After the presentation and a small group sharing about their respective experiences and concerns, the group narrowed the concerns to be addressed down to two:

- *Youth identity.* This was raised amid the current realities of CWE: cultural diversity, religious diversity, lack of deeper communication, political diversity (especially the emergence of the European Union), individualization and pluralization. Youth has choices but more often it is only to win, which sometimes results in addictions and other excessive expressions that lead to the destruction of young lives.



M. Janssen van Raay during her presentation in Berlin, Germany.

Photo by T. Valeriano
YICAS/DMD/LWF

Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Youth desk joined them at Stephanus-Stift in Weissense, hosted by the National Committee in Germany - Youth Committee.

Dr. Mary Janssen van Raay, an LWF Council member representing youth presented a discussion starter on emerging challenges of youth in this

Central to this theme of identity is youth's dilemma in trying to have fun without feeling guilty. For them, that means being able to enjoy life without close moralistic criticism. There has been a strong tradition in Western Christianity that would identify Christian life more with great suffering and much humility. Sometimes "fun" is seen as the "opposite side" of these Christian virtues. Christian life and fun do not exclude



each other, but rather belong together. But on a daily basis, young people are confronted with the question, "How can we make responsible and conscious choices and live with them?"

As most of the members of the Lutheran communion in CWE are minority churches, except for the Lutherans in Germany, the importance of raising the questions, "Does it make a difference to be a Lutheran?" and "How can we strengthen each other in finding our way in a world of diversity?" were also discussed.

responsible for collecting responses from the discussion forum. Wolfgang Lindner, another LWF Council member representing youth, gave a short presentation on basic Internet information to increase our overall knowledge. The YICAS desk will send initial information before the final launching of the discussion forum to prepare the youth. The questions formulated for the forum were:

- What questions do we raise about Lutheran identity?



A narrow but straight path near the marks left by the wall in Berlin may symbolize the path for the Central West Lutheran Youth Network.

Photo
by T. Valeriano
YICAS/DMD/FLM

- *Youth participation.* Inclusion of youth in all aspects of church and community life was identified as a continuing challenge. How are youth represented at the grass-roots level and in the decision-making process? The effectiveness of youth's presence and participation was discussed but further evaluation must be carried out to assess what has been achieved. Several obstacles have been identified as well: youth being seen or taken as "another" group, and doubts over youth's competence and impact.

- What is Lutheran identity in the context of a multi-religious and multicultural Europe?

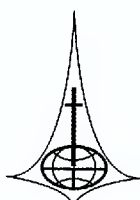
As follow-up to this virtual discussion, a small youth gathering for CWE youth was also proposed. A *Task Force for the CWE Youth Gathering* was established. The task force will gather some time this year to formulate more concrete goals, decide on the place, the number of participants and dates for the gathering, which should take place before or around the summer of 2002.

There was a discussion on the dilemma of youth choosing to participate either through traditional institutional ways set up for them by adults or introducing new ways of communication and participation for the effective raising and addressing of concerns and challenges.

We thank God for the encouragement given in this process, and look forward to receiving your comments, ideas and suggestions to ensure the most efficient network possible!

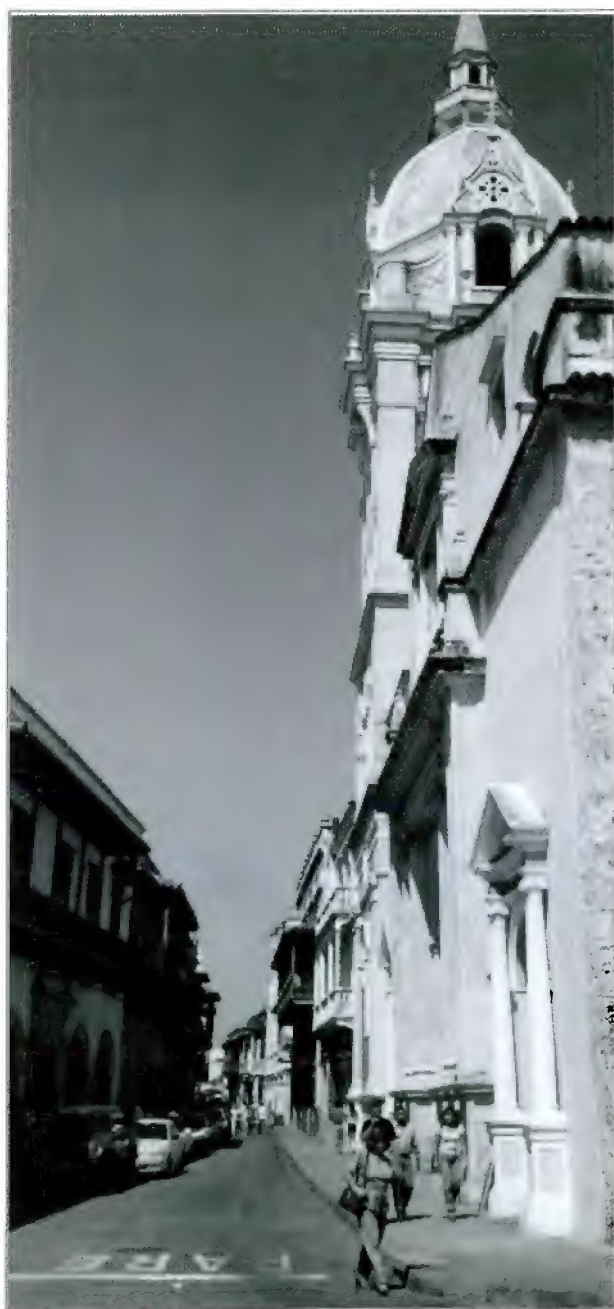
The following aim was agreed on: To strengthen identity among Lutheran youth amid cultural, religious and political diversity.

An *Action Plan* was developed aimed at reaching more young people to include them in discussion and activities to address these common concerns. An e-group discussion on "Identity among Lutheran Youth" will soon be set-up by Ronny Pasedag, while Regina Jaekel will be



Por Arisbé Gómez, Sínodo Luterano Salvadoreño, El Salvador

Una de las palabras mas bellas y de gran significado en nuestro vocabulario cristiano es "COMPARTIR". En nuestro encuentro de la Asamblea del Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias (CLAI) en Barranquilla, Colombia, los jóvenes luteranos formamos parte clave de este significado. Compartimos un encuentro en el que conocimos nuestras realidades, nuestras vidas en las iglesias, nuestras ideologías, nuestras culturas, nuestra conducción juvenil... con todas estas y otras experiencias, nos convertimos en una Latinoamérica unida y con una sola manifestación de fe.

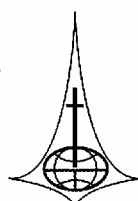


Callejuela con arquitectura colonial típica, Colombia.
Foto: Lucas Veira Sand, YICAS/DMD/FLM

La posibilidad de encontrarnos nos dio mucho entusiasmo, y reconocemos la oportunidad encontrada al crear espacios de compañerismo, lo cual significó el rescate del ánimo y la motivación juvenil para el mejor desempeño en la dinámica de trabajo con nuestros grupos juveniles. Además, conocimos más a fondo los programas que la FLM apoya de frente a los intereses sociales y políticos que atañen a las problemáticas juveniles, y la manera en que esto contribuye a un mejor desarrollo social para/con nuestras iglesias. Durante los encuentros entre luteranos, los temas más relevantes se relacionaron, por un lado, con la *Identidad Luterana* (formación doctrinal); por el otro, la preocupación de trabajar más en la temática de VIH/SIDA resultó primordial, en especial con relación a la *Sexualidad*.

En la Pre-Asamblea Juvenil del CLAI, la experiencia resultó muy participativa en las reacciones y discusiones de los diferentes temas desarrollados: *Jóvenes Unidos en Misión*, *Juventud Unidad y Misión*, *Violencia y Paz en la Juventud*, y *La Identidad Juvenil Frente a la Globalización*. Dentro de estos, se compartió la realidad social que traen las neotribus juveniles, las emociones sujetas a la difusión de ideologías como rebeldía ante los valores, y la energía subterránea que nos crea una sociedad de moda y consumo. También compartimos visiones y experiencias en los proyectos juveniles sobre Formación de Líderes, Globalización, y Juventud promoviendo acciones proactivas. Con esto, nos hemos focalizado en la temática del movimiento en la realidad actual que fomenta una sociabilidad dispersa, a la cual debemos dar respuesta cristiana expresada en nosotros/as mismos/as, en nuestros grupos y en nuestras iglesias. En otra instancia, cabe destacar el importante rol que la juventud Latinoamericana representó para la Asamblea General del CLAI.

Nuestra realidad nos lleva a retomar de frente nuestros desafíos de cara al futuro, tratando de aunar fuerzas en nuestras iglesias, en nuestros grupos juveniles y en nuestros principios educativos de diaconía, para dar así respuesta cristiana al fenómeno neotribal y al modelo neoliberal actual. Así también, dicha realidad nos llama a canalizar nuestras cualidades e involucrarnos en la misión conjunta, fomentando una mayor reflexión juvenil, y enfatizando a la idea de que los jóvenes somos la iglesia de hoy: esta-



mos llamados/as a la práctica cristiana dentro de la iglesia y la sociedad.

Gracias a Dios, sentí la satisfacción de una juventud que se manifiesta, participa y está presente en los resultados obtenidos en el encuentro Latinoamericano del CLAI. Del mismo modo, manifiesto la alegría y entusiasmo de todos los luteranos, quienes al reunirnos nos brindamos la oportunidad de expresar lo que nos acontece en nuestro ámbito grupal, eclesial y social, de formación y consolidación; y garantizo que esto significó un mayor compromiso adquirido por

los jóvenes de mi iglesia, hacia un mejor desempeño en la formación de liderazgo y el crecimiento de una conciencia justa con carácter de proacción social juvenil.

Arisbé Gómez es una joven del Sínodo Luterano Salvadoreño, El Salvador. Ella participará del Programa Internacional de Juventud, el cual comenzará en septiembre próximo. Arisbé también ha participado en las tareas de reconstrucción y rehabilitación posteriores a la catástrofe de los últimos terremotos en su El Salvador.



The author of the article, Arisbé, performing a traditional dance from El Salvador during the cultural night at the CLAI meeting 2001.

Photo
by T.Valeriano
YICAS/DMD/LWF

Youth celebrating their cultural heritage at the CLAI
Pre-Assembly for Youth meeting, 2001

Photo
by T.Valeriano
YICAS/DMD/LWF



YOUTH GATHERING AT LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES' ASSEMBLY NEW CHALLENGES EMERGE

Arisbé Gómez, Salvadoran Lutheran Synod (*Summary from Spanish*)

To SHARE is one of the most beautiful words in our rich, Christian vocabulary. Lutheran youth made a significant contribution in this regard in their encounters at the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) Assembly in Barranquilla, Colombia. Two issues came to the fore to be developed through networking: On the one hand, there is a need for some churches to strengthen Lutheran identity through training in doctrine. On the other, concern over HIV/AIDS is growing and that cannot be separated from sexuality.

but stood together as followers of the faith seeking to unite our efforts.

At the CLAI youth preparatory assembly, we also discussed pro-active youth activities for dealing with given social circumstances, including the neo-tribes and the hegemonic, neo-liberal social and economic model. As Christians, we need to respond to these challenges, through our youth groups and diaconal ministries, highlighting the idea of youth as the church of today called to Christian practice within church and society.



Youth marking the shape of their hands in paint in confirmation of their ecumenical commitment, Barranquilla, Colombia.

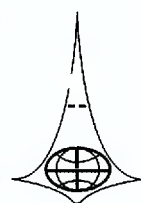
Photo
by T.Valeriano
YICAS/DMD/LWF

In the large meetings, the CLAI youth shared experiences and visions for the youth projects dealing with globalization and leadership. We focused on trends in today's world that are instigating social schisms. Some of the themes explored were "Youth United in Mission," "Violence and Peace in Youth," and "Youth Identity" in the face of globalization. We were able to share our experiences of how a consumer society drives energy underground. We came from different regions, cultures and ideologies with different youth leadership models

The experience we have gained will certainly have strengthened youth ministry leading to greater awareness of equality.

Arisbé Gómez, a young woman, has been working, through Lutheran World Service, to help people affected by the recent earthquakes in El Salvador. She will participate in the upcoming LWF International Youth Program.

Translation and summary by Lucas Veira Sand, former LWF staff.



The sun rises every day,
A new dawning
A new beginning,
A new chance to breathe,
To see the beauty of life and nature,
A new chance to love.

There's also a new face at the LWF Youth Desk:

My name is Stéfan Niederberger. I am the new administrative secretary to the LWF Secretary for Youth in Church and Society.

Born in Switzerland, my educational background includes commercial studies and four-year art studies in France. While in Paris, I learned not only to see the hidden beauty behind all things, but also gained a deep respect for working together with those around me. Furthermore, I learned to respect their treasures, their dreams and hopes. Even though there are cloudy skies in life, in respecting one another, you become guardians of those dreams and hopes. Dr. Martin Luther King once said: "Only when it's dark enough, you can see the stars."

I am very happy to be involved in the various upcoming youth gatherings and consultations, and in the preparation of the LWF *Youth* magazine. Such experiences not only enrich my work but, inevitably, also my personality and personal ambition.

I look forward to meeting many of you in the future and consider it a privilege to be witness to so many destinies. Each one of you carries so much hope and creativity on the different paths you are pursuing, the rivers and oceans you cross, and hills and mountains you climb.

At first glance, the rivers, mountains and trees I paint may appear to be easily done, but it's only when I begin the drawing that I become aware of the complexity of each tree, each leaf and each shade of color. Intense observation of God's creation is imperative to a finished painting. Only through observing and relaying the truth can a painting be truly authentic. This is true not only in the field of art but carries over into life in general.

The world is God's creation. Your life is your own creation, with His help.

WHAT WE GET IS LIVING
WHAT YOU GIVE IS A LIFE.



Stéfan Niederberger

LYS

Painting by Stéfan
Niederberger

“People think I am
disciplined. It is not
discipline – it is devotion..
There is a great difference.”

Luciano Pavarotti

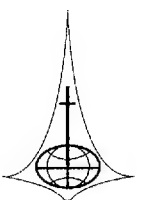


SUB ROSE

Painting by Stéfan
Niederberger

“Tell me, I’ll forget.
Show me, I may remember.
But involve me
and I’ll understand.”

Chinese proverb



ERITREA
UNDERSTANDING THE REGIONAL SITUATION
IN NORTH EAST AFRICA

In many places of our global home, "some people have the idea that their problems can be solved by inciting violence, which worsens their problems, rather than bringing a basic solution to them," Hiruy Bereket, from the Evangelical Church of Eritrea, points out. The situation in Eritrea seems to fit this description as well. Past and present tensions with Ethiopia spread violence, and its consequences. Silent violence, related to increasing poverty and displaced people from war, is one of the most dangerous forms of violence in Eritrea today. "Neither positive nor negative response has been given. So victims remain in the dark," Minia Fecadu, from the same church, says. If we, the church people, want to overcome this violence through God's love, we need to "follow in God's steps," she adds.

INDIA
YOUTH ACTIVITIES
IN THE NORTHERN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Bongaigaon Diocesan Youth Committee (BDYC), the youth arm of the Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church's Bongaigaon Diocesan Council, endeavors to equip people to play a prophetic role in church and society, and to involve youth in outreach ministry. Activities include a "Spiritual Renewal Programme" for the transformation of the church as a whole, and an annual "Evangelistic Campaign." Supporting, and being involved, in the ecumenical youth movement are also BDYC aims. The BDYC is a member of the Boro Christian Board Joint Youth Fellowship. The Sunday schools within most congregations seek to impart biblical knowledge and to motivate youth and children toward secular education to overcome illiteracy. (*Ipendra Borgoary, Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church, Dumka, India. Borgoary is an LWF Council member on the Program Committee for World Service.*)

INDIA
INCREASED EFFORTS
TO OVERCOME VIOLENCE IN VILLAGES

Increasing socio-economic violence can be noted in India due to the great disparity between rich and poor. Sixty percent of people live below the poverty line. The country is often seen from the viewpoint of big cities, but the majority of the population in India lives in villages. In this multi-religious nation, there exists a form of suppression of minorities by the same government that has always promised protection of minorities, especially women. Currently, both churches and non-governmental organizations are deeply involved in the development of women and children in Madhya Pradesh. Special reference is made to Chindwara and Betul, districts where promotion of social change through the leadership and participation of women and men from tribal villages is being developed, and life-style changes are being encouraged, for example:

- organization of women's groups to improve their socio-economic conditions
- organization of adult literacy classes for women and men
- a pre-school program and non-formal education
- better farm irrigation facilities, and
- an education system aimed at better health and farming, among others.

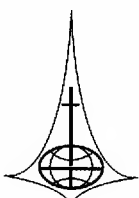
These activities, which promote active and equal involvement, provide for youth of the church in Madhya Pradesh to overcome violent behavior.

(*Praja Sweta Rao is the LWF Youth Liaison in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh, India.*)

MADAGASCAR
ANNUAL YOUTH ACTIVITY REPORT YEAR 2000

The National Youth Department of the Malagasy Lutheran Church has the following objectives: to strengthen young people's faith, provide training in leadership skills and advocate for God's creation. Activities include:

- evangelistic Bible teaching based on the Gospel of Luke, with the theme "Christ, Peace of the World"
- a growing choir that is livening up worship services and gatherings, and
- encouragement toward care of the environment, particularly in relation to overcoming deforestation.



NEWS IN BRIEF

The increasing impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is also challenging Malagasy youth. They have developed and conducted national seminars directed at the grass-roots level to raise awareness for prevention, and for the care of sufferers. Other health issues are also a challenge. Sports activities are encouraged to counter drug abuse as well as to strengthen contact, solidarity and communion among the country's youth.

(Rev. Georg Samoela, youth pastor)

NIGERIA

NATIONAL MEETING OF YOUTH IN NIGERIA

The National Conference of the Lutheran Youth Fellowship (LYF), from the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN), gathered from 18-22 April 2001 in the Bauchi State of Nigeria. This annual event is organized to strengthen youth's faith. Centered around the theme "The Lord Is my Light and my Salvation" (Ps 27:1), the program developed activities such as discussion, teaching, drama, Bible study, and concerts. Ms. Agatha Kennedy was congratulated on becoming the first female president of the LYF in Liberia.

(Chafari Luka)

SUDAN

(LWI 5/2001)

SUDAN'S "LOST BOYS" TO SETTLE IN USA

More than 3,000 of the so-called "lost boys of Sudan," now young adults, have been approved for resettlement in the United States of America by the state department there. An additional 200 Sudanese boys from Kakuma Refugee Camp, managed by the Lutheran World Federation Department for World Service, are being resettled in the USA under the unaccompanied minors program. The "lost boys" remain from some 30,000-40,000 Sudanese children who fled Sudan in the late 1980s to escape war and forced military service. They reached Ethiopia after a four-month trek. Forced to leave Ethiopia in 1991-2, they returned to Sudan, many of them subsequently fleeing to northern Kenya. Survivors of these journeys, about 90 percent male mainly from the Dinka ethnic group, lost their families. They will be resettled in the USA in the small groups in which they have lived in the Kakuma camp for the past seven years.

SWITZERLAND

LWF INTERNS TO UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

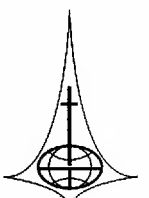
Last March and April, the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights was held in Geneva. LWF staff attending this annual international event included two young interns: Aishya Prakash, a young man from the Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church (India), and Lucas Veira Sand, former YICAS intern from the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (Argentina). They attended a preliminary training week, together with some 30 people from other organizations to become familiar with the UN system and procedures. Prakash focused on the issue of "Religious Intolerance" and Veira Sand on "Impunity and Independence of the Judiciary." The LWF also addressed the theme on "Economic Globalization" within the item on "Economic and Social Rights."

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LUTHERAN YOUTH WORKERS LEARN IT'S "OKAY TO BE HUNGRY"

During the fifth annual Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which was held in San Diego, United States of America, from 9-12 February, Efrem Smith, a youth pastor, told 730 youth workers it is "okay" for them to be "hungry." Whether ministering in rural or suburban areas, people who work with youth face difficult times and evil forces. Smith told youth workers to attend to their own intimacy with God, who is moving in their ministry, and that they need to have a daily meal with God. "Feed your faith in a variety of ways; follow a well balanced meal," he said. Other speakers were also invited to the event. Workshop topics ranged from urban youth ministry to "real questions" young people are asking society today.

(ELCA News Service)



WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
WHERE ARE THE YOUNG PEOPLE?

TANZANIA

Usually, it is not so encouraging to see so few people in the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical movements. However, according to Freddy Knutsen (Secretary for Youth), things have started to change. The WCC has a stewards program, including specific training on ecumenism, organized around the central committee meetings. Such a program has developed fruitful discussions, which has become very substantive for both people of the committee and young stewards. Through this experience, they all not only talk about ecumenism, but experience it as a reality by living and sharing different faith traditions and the testimony of the youth.

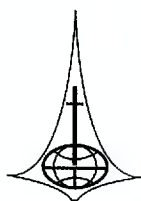
(WCC Newsletter)

Young people from the network of The Lutheran Communion in Central and Eastern Africa (LUCCEA) held their Youth Committee Meeting from 17 to 18 July 2001 in Arusha, Tanzania, right before the LUCCEA Assembly. The youth, like other delegates to the Assembly, met under the theme "For I Know the Plans I Have for You" (Jer 29:11). During their meeting, the youth discussed and elaborated a statement from the youth to the General Assembly. They also received local, regional and global reports. HIV/AIDS work in churches was one of the main points of discussion as they prepared and discussed the Africa Youth Consultation and networking.



"Prayer needs a heart – not a voice" says a notice posted behind these Indian children.

Photo by Bennet Prasannakumar, OFA/LWF



UPCOMING EVENTS



Fellowship in action at a youth camp in Thailand.

Photo by
Pranee Chenkong,
LWF Youth Liaison
in the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in
Thailand.

SEPTEMBER

Twenty-four young people from all regions of the LWF communion were selected to participate in the International Youth Program: Transformation through Participation. The event has three main parts: An orientation-week course in Geneva, 18-24 September 2001, a fifteen-month internship implementing the projects envisioned during the Orientation Conference, and an international event to gather and share their experiences. It aims to assist youth in shaping visions and implementation while assisting LWF member churches with internationally aware and competent youth. Through the internship program, twenty-four participants will establish an international network addressing the challenges of globalization. Resource material on the event will be published in the local context, and for later use.

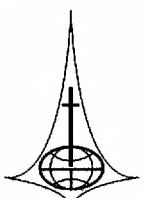
OCTOBER

“Youth Exchange Program” - Eleven youth from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand will visit the Lutheran Church in Singapore.

NOVEMBER

The Asian Lutheran Youth Consultation will take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 22-27 November. Up to thirty participants, nominated and endorsed by the LWF member churches, will be invited for a five-day meeting. Participants are expected to be active in their home church's youth work, and aged between eighteen to thirty years. They will share and exchange information, evaluate networking and discuss issues youth need to address in church and society. They will gather around the theme “A/50 Reconciling Church (For the Healing of the World).”

A Leadership Training and Resource Development Programme for students and young people is currently being organized jointly by the World Student Christian Federation and World Council of Churches. The program will last for three years, involving people aged between eighteen to twenty-five years who are keenly interested in ecumenical work from different denominations worldwide. The ecumenical learning project will be the first step in the process, starting with a meeting in Cuba from 5 to 25 November 2001. This will be followed by individual local projects from the participants, and continue on to an “Evaluation Seminar.” Developing resource material on leadership training, the final step, is intended for contribution to youth and student work in local churches.



I am a 22-year-old female student. I am currently doing my final year of studies at a teachers college "Holy Trinity" in Papua New Guinea.

My hobby's are: reading, travelling, charity work, photographs, singing and traditional dance.

Ms. Lilian GAM
P.O. Box 1198
LAE, MOROBE PROVINCE
PG - PAPUA NEW GUINEA

I am looking for pen pals from all over the world, especially those of you who are "born-again Christians" and lay evangelists. I am in my late 20s and I am interested in evangelism ministry.

Mr. Mothusi Andrew MARIPE
ELCB
P.O. Box 365
GABORONE
BW - BOTSWANA

I would like to have Christian pen friends from English and French-speaking countries.

Harioely Tiranarimamy
Lot 1B 385/3611
301 FIANARANTSOA
MG - MADAGASCAR

I am a citizen of Ghana who wants to have male or female pen pals from all over the world.
I like to correspond, and listen to music.

Mr. Benjamin ARHIN BLANKSON
M. V. M P.O. Box 80
TAKORADI
GH - GHANA

I am a music director and want to make pen friends with Christians from all over the world
(English and French).

Mr. Jasoa Fanome Zana
BP 653
401 MAHAJANGA
MG - MADAGASCAR

My name is Razanaporany Erica. I am 20 years old. I want to correspond with young people who have English as a native tongue from Africa and Europe. I am a third year student studying English at the University of Antananarivo. Please write to:

Razanaporany Erica
Lot 1B1 8 Isoraka
101 ANTANANARIVO
MG - MADAGASCAR

I am a young Ethiopian man. I am 19 years old and the third child of a family. I am a high school student attending the 11th grade. I would like to have a pen friend. My hobbies are reading books and the Bible, listening to the radio, watching dramas on TV, video films and playing ball. I am interested in exchanging post-cards and photos as well as information about our country with the aim of introducing our culture.

Bekuma GETACHEW
Mettu Comprehensive High School
P.O. Box 142, Mettu
ILLUBABOR
ET - ETHIOPIA

I am an 18-year-old girl studying in high school. I would like to have a pen pal. My hobbies are listening to music, watching films, making friends and reading books. I also like nature. I prefer to have male pen pals above my age.

Seida ABDULAH
P.O. Box 6330
ADDIS ABABA
ET - ETHIOPIA

I am interested in having pen pals from any part of the world. I am a young college student of 23 years of age. My hobbies are reading the Bible, listening to spiritual songs, watching spiritual video films and reading spiritual and political magazines. I reply to letters in English and Amharic.

Asalifew AMADIN
P.O. Box 115
AWASSA
ET - ETHIOPIA

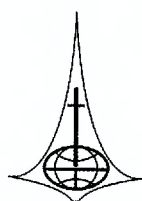
I am a 25-year-old young man, graduated from a nursing school and am now working in this profession in the health institution of a non-governmental organization in Nadjo. I would be happy to have a pen friend from Europe, USA, Latin America and Africa (including Ethiopia).

Mr. Israel GETACHEW
Nadjo Clinic
P.O. Box 5
NEDJO, WEST WOLLEGA ZONE
ET - ETHIOPIA

I am a young Ethiopian man aged 21 and I am looking for pen pals from all over the world. My hobbies are watching dramas on TV and exchanging gifts and photos. I reply to letters in English.

Mr. Mengistu TAKELE
B.G.N.R. State
P.O. Box 14
ASOSSA
ET - ETHIOPIA

The above letters have been lightly edited for clarity.



LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

May I take this opportunity to greet you all in the name of Jesus Christ. Firstly, I would like to thank you for sending me the *Youth* magazine. I would also like to let you know how much I am interested in reading it.

Bhekithembah H. Zwane, Swaziland

Thank you very much for supporting many youth in the world with your popular *Youth* magazine. May God help you and all your staff for all the work you are doing.

Ali Agymang J., Ghana

Greetings in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I thank you so much for the December issue of *Youth* magazine. I really enjoyed it so much, especially the message addressed to youth, the colorful print and the fact that it's done by youth.

Zewdie Etana, Ethiopia

I am very grateful for the good work that you folks are doing for the kingdom of God.

We are able to know what's happening in Christ's church just from your magazine. You are making us meet other Lutherans. Keep the good work up.

Maripe Mothusi Andrew, Botswana.

Thank you very much for your LWF December *Youth* magazine 2000: Youth Redefining Hope

Let God bless you, your home and nation too.

Tezera Klotde Medmin, Ethiopia

I've just opened my copy of the *Youth* magazine No. 46, and was absolutely delighted to see our story on the first couple of pages! That will be a real encouragement to our young people over here. We are a tiny church by world standards, but there is such good spirit and enthusiasm among our youth that it nearly blows me away. Thank you for supporting our small church and our wonderful young people in this way!!!! This will be a real blessing to them.

God bless you, too.

Linda Macqueen, Australia

editor.lutheran@lca.org.au

I did see the magazine No. 46, and read the article, and was very pleased with how it came out, the entire magazine, in fact, and those of others I know in there, like Luke and Vaughn. Friends from Canada to Argentina have commented positively on the Luz de Luna coverage.

Brian Rude, El Salvador

I am very much pleased in getting the new issue of the *Youth* magazine. How nice it appears again with a lot of new ideas and experiences that truly one can gain precious teaching from. I read it from cover to cover in one night. I can only say God bless

the editors, the youth who are showing and being a good example all over the world and the postal workers, responsible for the distribution.

Yoseph Shiferan, Ethiopia

I would like to take this golden opportunity to thank the Youth Desk staff for the wonderful and most interesting *Youth* magazine.

It contains very touching stories of the everyday happening in our lives. Let God bless you for the time you spent on the magazine and keep up always the best work.

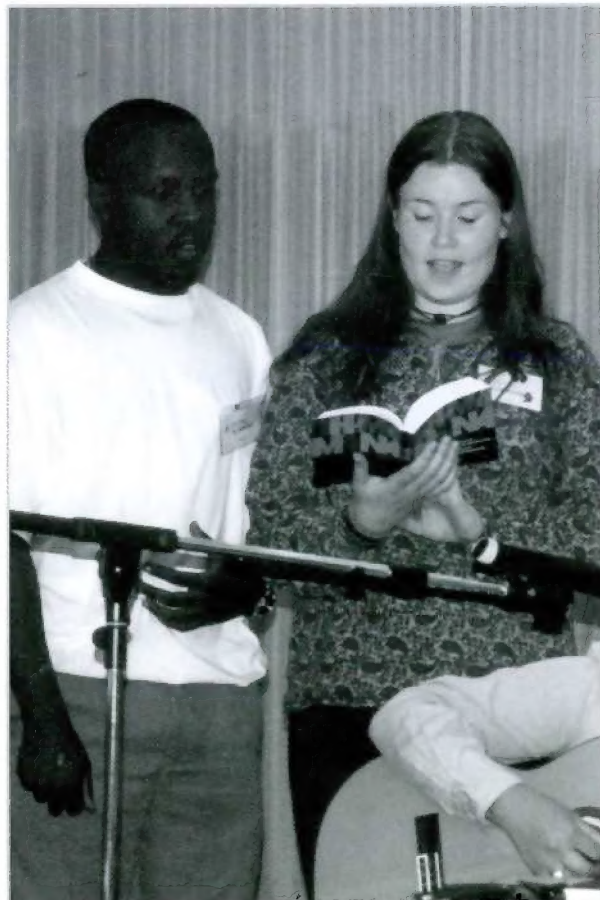
Talyakali Poko, Papua New Guinea

I am a regular reader of, and am very much fascinated by, this magazine. It is of such great help to me that I can communicate rich ideas to the youth in my church. I wish to contribute by writing for this magazine. Do you assign a particular theme for every issue? If so, let me know the theme for the next issue.

I want to participate actively in youth programs at my local church. Let me know if your desk has any directions and suggestions. Thank you. May God guide and bless you in all your endeavors. Yours in Christ,

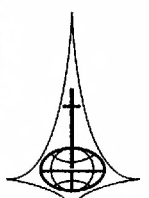
K. Sreekanth J. Ratna Raj, India

The above letters have been lightly edited for clarity.



Kanyoro Mahungi (Switzerland/Kenya) and Elin Rasmussen (France/Norway) leading the Council meeting evening devotion.

Photo by T. Valeriano YICAS/DMD/LWF



Lutheran Youth



Lutheran World Federation
Department for Mission and Development
Youth in Church and Society
International Youth Program
Transformation through Participation
2001-2003

